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Benjamin Franklin, Orthoepist and Phonetician

VOL. 1

Language, Literacy and Social Mobility in
Franklin's World

Gary D. German



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,
ORTHOEPIST AND PHONETICIAN

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AMERICAN
PHILOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY

To my wife, Marie-Laure, to my children, Glyn,
Morwenna, Ronan

and my five grandchildren, Gabriel, Nora, Timothée,
Liam and Mathis

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In this vein, I also salute the memory of my PhD supervisors, now both deceased. To them, I pay my respects and express my deep appreciation, first to Professor Jean Le Dù (Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest), for the many hours we spent transcribing various Breton dialects into the IPA, for his guidance and steadfast support during the years of research on Breton dialectology (1984), and for his friendship for over forty years. Similarly, my sincere thanks to Professor Jean-Marc Gachelin (Université du Littoral - Calais, Boulogne, Dunkerque) for his support, advice and remarkable knowledge of English and French dialectology and linguistics (both diachronic and theoretical) during the preparation for my PhD on the diachronic origins and sociolinguistics of Welsh English. He too became a dear friend. I consider it a rare privilege to have benefited from the erudition of these two remarkable scholars.

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Philosophical Society. I am also very grateful to the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>) for having made so many valuable documents about Franklin and related resources available to the general public. Without these and other online resources, particularly during the long Covid epidemic, I would never have had the heart nor the fortitude to finish writing this book.

More broadly, I acknowledge my indebtedness to all the scholars whose work is cited throughout this book, not only those who have worked on Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling* but, just as important, to all those who have contributed to our knowledge of English and American historical phonology, dialectology and sociolinguistics. My work was built on theirs. My sincere hope is that this book will contribute to our knowledge of not only Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling*, but, more broadly, to our understanding of early American English historical phonology.

Last, and certainly not least, I wish to express my profound appreciation and heartfelt thanks to my wife, Marie-Laure, for the many hours she spent reading my work, for her sound (socio)linguistic observations and advice, but also her great patience over the many years it has taken me to complete this book. I could never have accomplished this project without her unwavering support.

Author Biography

Gary D. (Manhec) German is a dual French and American national. Born in Paris, he was raised in a multilingual household with family roots in Finistère, Lancashire, North Wales, and the United States (Massachusetts and Virginia). He holds two PhDs (in Breton dialectology and in the sociolinguistics/linguistics of Welsh English) and an Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches (English sociolinguistics). He is an Emeritus Professor of English at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest, where he taught English phonology and grammar, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics from 1999 to 2018. He has been a member of the Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique (UBO) for over forty-five years. In this capacity, he taught Breton historical phonology, Breton dialectology and Middle Welsh literature. Previously, he taught English language and linguistics at the Universities of Nantes, Poitiers as well as French and English at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.

Phonetic Notation

The notion of an “ideal speaker” living in a “completely homogenous speech community” who can intuitively determine the grammatical correctness or “well-formedness” of any given sentence is merely a theoretical construct and that is precisely what Chomsky intended (Chomsky 1965). In reality, however, the social status and geographical provenance of any given individual determines the degree to which he/she is exposed to the varieties and registers that compose his/her native language(s). For this reason, one’s knowledge and mastery of it can only ever be partial. This explains the variation that exists between members of the same speech community and even between members of one’s own family. In this sense, individual speakers are like dots in a pointillist painting. Only when one steps back and views them collectively can one fully appreciate the complexity of the total image before us.

I have studied Franklin’s *Reformed Mode of Spelling* and the genesis of American English from a variationist viewpoint. As I explain in the General Introduction, although the English of England and North America have the same basic origins, I consider that each regional dialect, subdialect and micro-dialect in both Britain and America has/had its own specific cultural and social history and thus its own phonemic subsystem(s). From a diachronic perspective, this is of critical importance.

For instance, Graham Shorrocks (1998) identified two distinct /ɛ:/ and /ɛ:/ phonemes in modern Bolton (Lancashire) English, just as in Middle English. How can this possibly fit into the Received Pronunciation/General American phonemic scheme (henceforth RP/GA)? Given the porosity between the phonemic boundaries between dialects, especially during the period under consideration, I was hesitant to present phonemic notation of any kind when discussing the colonial data assembled from the 17th- and 18th-century American and English sources. The same problem arises when considering British dialects as a whole. I have argued throughout this book that presenting a phonemic analysis under such conditions is based on the dubious assumption that the standard language should be the baseline by which all other varieties must be studied (cf. J. Milroy’s “standard ideology,” 1982).

Because of these uncertainties, I have preferred to use broad phonetic

transcription throughout this book and, in particular, wherever the data is available, I do my best to present what I have termed “phonetic ranges,” collections of competing variants which are composed of “bridge” or “transition” vowels, that is to say, allophones which can potentially belong to two different phonemes depending on the variety studied (cf. Chapter 11, Chapter 12 and Chapter 17 for a precise definition and discussion). Furthermore, in the case of phoneticians who use fine phonetic notation (i.e. Joseph Hall, 1942; Shorrocks, 1998), I have simplified their transcriptions to conform to this general approach but also for a very practical reason: phoneticians do not always agree on the precise quality of a sound that is represented by a given phonetic character or diacritic.

Likewise, it has not always been easy to interpret the precise phonetic values attributed to certain phonetic symbols used by earlier phoneticians such as Duncan MacKintosh, Charles Grandgent, George C. Krapp and others. In particular, their interpretations of low-mid back vowel “[ɔ(:)]” and unrounded low back [ɒ(:)] or completely unrounded [ɑ(:)] are particularly problematical and will be discussed in detail in Part III (Chapter 21 and Chapter 22). Even today, John Wells (1990, 2005) stresses the difficulty of identifying the quality of these vowels in American English.

IPA Vowel and Consonant Symbols, Descriptions and Key Words

Front vowels			Back vowels		
IPA	Vowel type	Key word	IPA	Vowel type	Key word
i(:)	High tense	Meat (tense Fr vie)	u(:)	High rounded	Goose
i(·)	High tense	Kit [ki-ɪt] (US South)	ʊ	High rounded	Foot
ɪ	High lax	Kit	ɔ(:)	High-mid rounded	Skol (Br)
ɛ(:)	High lax	Été “summer” (Fr)	ɤ	Slightly centralized high-mid	Strut (Nfk)
ɛ(·)	Mid	Ker “farm” (Br)	ɔ(·)	Mid rounded	Hole (GA)
ɛ(:)	Low mid	Face (Lancashire)	ɤ	Slightly centralized mid	Strut (Lancs)
æ	Low	Trap	ɔ(:)	Low-mid	Taught
a(:)	Lower	Là “there” (Fr)	ʌ	Slightly centralized low-mid	But (RP)
			ɒ(:)	Low	Lot (RP)
			ɑ(:)	Lower	Lot (GA)

Br = Breton, Nfk = Norfolk, Lnc = Lancashire

Front vowels			Central vowels		
IPA	Vowel type	Key word	IPA	Vowel type	Key word
y(:)	Rounded high front	Tu (Fr)	ə	Mid-mid central	Road (Avis, 1971; NE US)
ɥ(:)	Less rounded high front	Go (Lancs)	ə	Central	Better (RP)
ø	High-mid rounded front	Eux (Fr)	ɜ:	Low-mid central	Bird (RP)
œ	Low-mid rounded front	Oeuf (Fr)			

Consonants		
IPA	Consonant type	Key words
p	Voiceless bilabial stop	Pale
b	Voiced bilabial stop	Bale
t	Voiceless alveolar-dental	Tale
d	Voiced alveolar-dental stop	Dale
k	Voiceless velar stop	Key
g	Voiced velar stop	Go
f	Voiceless labio-dental fricative	Fat
v	Voiced labio-dental fricative	Vat
θ	Voiceless inter-dental fricative	Thin
ð	Voiced inter-dental fricative	Then
s	Voiceless sibilant/apico-alveolar fricative	Sip
z	Voiced sibilant/apico-alveolar fricative	Zip
ʃ	Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	Ship
ʒ	Voiced palato-alveolar fricative	Measure
h	Voiceless glottal fricative	Hat
l	Apico-alveolar lateral	Led
ɫ	Velar lateral/“dark <l>”	Well
ɾ	Apico-alveolar flap	Better (GA)
ɻ	Strongly retroflex /r/	Rare (Somerset)
r	Apico-alveolar /r/	Right (Scots)
ɹ	Approximant /r/	Rare (RP/GA)
ʁ	Uvular /r/	Rire (Fr)
m	Voiced bilabial nasal	Mom
n	Voiced apico-alveolar nasal	Nine
ŋ	Voiced velar nasal	King
w	Bilabial approximant	Wind
j	Voiced palatal approximant	Yellow
tʃ	Voiceless palato-alveolar affricate	Chin
dʒ	Voiced palato-alveolar affricate	Gin
hw	Voiceless labialized glottal affricate	When (GA)

Diacritics	
C ^h	Aspirated consonant
Ç	Syllabic consonant
Ç̤	Voiced consonant
Ç̥	Voiceless consonant
Ṽ	Nasal vowel as in French ([ã], [õ], [ẽ...])
Ṳ	Central vowel
V:	Long vowel
V·	Half-long vowel
ˈ	Primary stress (syllable or word)
ˌ	Secondary stress (syllable or word)

Acronyms

ALF – *Atlas linguistique de la France*, Gilliéron and Edmont (1902-1910)

AAVE – African American Vernacular English

ALBB – *Atlas Linguistique de la Basse-Bretagne*, Pierre Le Roux (1924-1967)

EME – Early Middle English

GA – General American, the label used to describe the pronunciation of the majority of the American people spreading out from the mid-west to the far west and excluding the eastern seaboard, both north and south.

GVS – Great Vowel Shift

LALME – *Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English*, Angus McKintosh et al. (1986)

ME – Middle English

NALBB – *Nouvel Atlas Linguistique de la Basse-Bretagne*, Jean Le Dû (2001)

OE – Old English

OF – Old French

RMS – *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (the title of Franklin's treatise on modernizing English orthography)

RP – "Received Pronunciation." Although this term is somewhat dated, I prefer it to "southern British English" which, in my view, is terribly vague in that we don't know whether we are dealing with dialects or educated/standard southern English pronunciation.

SAWD – *Survey of Anglo-Welsh Dialects*, David Parry (vol. 1, 1977; vol. 2, 1979)

SED – *Survey of English Dialects*, Orton and Deith (1962-71)

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Preface: Franklin, a “Forgotten Phonetician”?

Joan Beal

In 1948, the *Transactions of the Philological Society* published a paper by David Abercrombie entitled “Forgotten Phoneticians,” in which the author challenged the “firm opinion in some quarters that before about 1830 there was no such thing as phonetics” (Abercrombie, 1948, 1). Abercrombie presented accounts of five British authors who created more or less phonetic systems of spelling, but whose work had, at the time of his paper, been largely ignored. Benjamin Franklin is mentioned (*ibid.*, 21) as having used the same transcription for the diphthong in words such as *kind* and *by* as Abraham Tucker, but is not otherwise discussed. Whether Abercrombie considered Franklin a “forgotten phonetician” is not clear, but what he has to say about Thomas Spence, could perhaps apply even more to Franklin: “Spence is a forgotten phonetician, but he is not forgotten as a political thinker, and a good deal is known about his life” (*ibid.*, 27).

In this meticulous and wide-ranging study, Gary German makes a wholly convincing case for including Franklin in the canon of “forgotten phoneticians” and demonstrates the importance of his spelling scheme for our understanding of the nature of American English pronunciation in the colonial period and its continuity with contemporary southern English vernaculars. He also tells us a great deal about Franklin’s life and the influences that lay behind his ideas on language. This alone would make for an important monograph, but there is far more in this volume. Gary also provides original manuscript material that has hitherto never been published, and compares the evolution of New England English pronunciation with that of Québécois French to provide new insights into the genesis of colonial varieties.

Only Gary German could have written this book. If readers steeped in the Anglicist tradition are unfamiliar with his name, it is because much of his career has been spent conducting research on Breton and other Celtic languages. Born in France, with a British-American father and a Breton-speaking mother from Finistère, and having grown up in France, Massachusetts and Virginia, Gary is

able to bring a range of perspectives to this study, and to be free of the linguistic ideology of any one nation. I first met him at a conference on Celtic Englishes held in Potsdam in 2004 and renewed our acquaintance when I moved to Brittany in 2013. We have had many discussions on linguistic matters over the years, but found special commonality between my interest in Spence and his in Franklin. When Gary told me that he had written an article about Franklin's alphabet, I encouraged him to submit it to *Transactions of the Philological Society* (TPS) because of the legacy of Abercrombie's paper, but neither of us had any idea then what this would grow into. From a fifty-eight-page research paper examining Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling*, the study has grown into the monumental volume you see here. As explained in the Introduction, questions raised by the reviewers of the original paper were fully taken on board and no stone (or page) left unturned by a scholar determined to track down every bit of evidence pertinent to his research and to fully justify the methodology used to evaluate this evidence.

The Introduction and Synopsis chapters which bookend this volume provide clear and comprehensive overviews of its content, so I shall here confine myself to pointing out what I consider to be the work's most useful and important features. I have already hinted at its comprehensiveness, but the depth of detail presented here is accompanied by a breadth of scope that makes the work of interest to scholars working in a number of fields. The nine chapters of Part I give a holistic account of Franklin's life and influences in the context of the turbulent times in which he lived. This part could stand alone as a new biography of Franklin, but here it provides a fascinating and highly relevant background to the study of his reformed spelling, making clear his political, ideological, religious and practical motivations for advocating the system. In seeing literacy as a means of social advancement and reformed spelling as an aid to literacy, Franklin accords with other would-be reformers of his time, such as Thomas Spence. A comparative analysis of their work and approaches is undertaken in Chapter 14.

Like Spence, Franklin also advocated a standard of pronunciation to which he did not himself conform. Part II deals with the (historical) sociolinguistics of the colonial period in America, drawing on a wide range of references from sociolinguistics, dialectology, creole studies and world Englishes to outline the theoretical foundations of the study. Of particular interest to scholars of world Englishes will be the comparative account of the origins of Québécois French and New England English in Chapter 11 and the discussion of the nature of koines in Chapter 12. To my knowledge, the French/English comparison has not been discussed before and provides important insights into the origins of colonial varieties.

For scholars of historical phonology, the most important part of the book will be Parts III and IV, which discuss in detail the phonological repertoires of early

New England English and their sources in dialects of British English (Part III) and of the system represented in Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling*. These accounts draw on evidence from a wide range of sources, including the works of 16th- and 17th-century British orthoepists and poetry by Franklin and contemporary New England poets, the *Reformed Mode of Spelling* itself, and letters by Franklin and his correspondent and collaborator Polly Stevenson written in his reformed alphabet. As such, Part III provides an account of early American English on a scale not seen since Krapp's (1925) *The English Language in America*, while Part IV demonstrates for the first time that his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* was an attempt to replicate what he perceived to be cultivated London English as spoken during the 1760s and 70s. A footnote in the synopsis chapter reads "I should note that, forty years ago when I spoke to a well-known linguist about undertaking a similar study on the historical phonology of colonial American English, I was told that it was 'impossible.'" This book has proved that the "well-known linguist" was wrong.

The four appendices provide a wealth of original material which will prove to be a stimulus to, and an invaluable aid for scholars conducting research on eighteenth-century English pronunciation. Appendix 1 reproduces chapter 5 of Benjamin Vaughan's *Political, Miscellaneous and Philosophical Pieces Written by Benjamin Franklin* (1779), in which the *Reformed Mode of Spelling* appears in full. Appendix 2 contains reproductions of the correspondence between Franklin and Polly Stevenson, some of which has never been published before, along with IPA transcriptions of the parts written in Franklin's reformed alphabet. For the first time, Appendix 3 provides a glossary of all the words transcribed by Franklin and Stevenson in their "reformed mode of spelling" along with IPA transcriptions and transcriptions of the same words in today's General American English. Appendix 4 gathers the correspondence between Noah Webster and Benjamin Franklin between 1786 and 1789, demonstrating that Franklin was the unseen hand behind Webster's attempt to establish a modern American orthography. Webster's letters to Franklin have never before been published.

It is very rare today to see a single-authored monograph of this size and scope. The demands of research managers and assessments such as the Research Excellence Framework in the UK push scholars towards publishing shorter monographs and journal papers rather than spending ten years on a *magnum opus* such as this. Publishers are likewise financially constrained and often prefer multi-authored handbooks. Gary German, the Philological Society and Open Book Publishers are all to be heartily congratulated for their patience and persistence in bringing out this monumental volume and for making it available to the widest readership as open access.

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General Introduction

Benjamin Franklin has been hailed as an inventor, scientist, printer, author, philosopher, diplomat, philanthropist and political activist and, most notably, as a founding father of the United States. Yet, who has ever heard of him described as a phonetician or an orthoepist? I certainly had not imagined him in this light until I discovered his treatise entitled *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (henceforth RMS) which he conceived and put on paper in the summer of 1768. In this short fourteen-page presentation, Franklin outlined a plan for the radical modernization of the English spelling system that would serve as a pronunciation guide for what he envisaged to be “correct” English. The social and sociolinguistic reasons for its inception as well as what that model entailed linguistically are the focus of this book.

Franklin dreamt, in vain, that his RMS might replace the traditional English orthography that we still use today, a system that he considered illogical, cumbersome and, given that it is based on 15th-century English pronunciation, woefully out-of-date. As we shall see, this has been the conviction of specialists of every generation from the time of Sir Thomas Smith (1568) to the present day. In this sense, Franklin is just one of a long list of thinkers who have tried, and failed, to modify English spelling conventions.

Considering the rapid changes in speech that were underway during the 18th century, Franklin openly feared that, if English spelling were not modernized, there would eventually be no connection between the written word and its pronunciation. Written words would become “things,” he said, having no phonetic reality. He insisted on this point in his July 20 and September 28, 1768, letters to his friend and confidante, Polly Stevenson.

At a time when few had access to formal schooling, the point of his scheme was to design an alphabet that would serve two principal purposes:

- a. to help uneducated common people, foreigners and particularly children to learn to read and write within a few weeks;
- b. to provide a model of “correct” English pronunciation for them.

For Franklin, literacy meant gaining access to knowledge and a well-formed mind, he believed, was the gateway to social and economic equality and

advancement. Identifying the nature of the model of English he imagined for his RMS is one of the central goals of this book.

The pedagogical dimension of his new orthographic proposal was thus at the heart of this endeavour. I would also submit that he may also have imagined his RMS as a didactic aid in the context of his “English school,” a branch of the Philadelphia Academy which he founded in 1749 (later the University of Pennsylvania). Indeed, Franklin was one of the first educators to promote the teaching of English pronunciation and grammar as a formal academic discipline, alongside Greek and Latin (Chapter 14 and Chapter 29). This ties in well with the objectives and guidelines he presents in his RMS. It would also explain the formal nature of his mode of transcription where even the vowels of final unstressed syllables are transcribed under their full forms.

In 1768, when Franklin drafted the first version of his orthographic reform, he was a colonial agent in London (1757-1775). Overwhelmed and dispirited by his endless, futile attempts to defend the rights of the colonial American legislatures, he was never able to develop his spelling reform proposals. For this reason, the version of the document that has come down to us resembles a rough draft rather than a final, polished treatise. As such, he presents only the broad outlines of his scheme as well as three tables of vowels and consonants, interspersed with brief, but insightful, observations and comments.

In 1779, eleven years after he had sent his phonetic scheme to Polly Stevenson, his good friend and fellow Whig, Benjamin Vaughan, edited an anthology of Franklin’s writings to which he gave the title, *Political, Miscellaneous and Philosophical Pieces Written by Benjamin Franklin*. Quite remarkably, the book was published in London, without any official attempts to censor it, at a time when the British army was involved in bloody fighting against the American revolutionaries, and while Franklin himself was in Paris negotiating a commercial and military alliance with England’s archenemies.

Franklin’s treatise, entitled *Reformed Mode of Spelling* appears in the final chapter of this book (Franklin, 1779, 467-478). This does not include two unnumbered vowel and consonant tables. His treatise also contains the transcription of two stanzas of Joseph Addison’s poem, “The Campaign” (1704), and two letters entirely transcribed in the new alphabet. The first is rather short and is written by Polly Stevenson in which she signals the drawbacks of his system and the second is Franklin’s September 28th response to her criticisms. However, Franklin’s important July 20, 1768 letter to Polly Stevenson was absent from Vaughan’s edition and as well as all later editions until William Willcox’s *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (vol. 15), 1972.

Despite its unfinished character, both Franklin and Vaughan felt strongly enough about the importance of his orthographic scheme to include it among his scientific and philosophical papers. Polly Stevenson’s possible collaboration

with Vaughan will be considered in Chapter 25.

In 1786, none other than Noah Webster would take great interest in Franklin's RMS and the two men met in the fall of that year to discuss a plan to launch another attempt to reform the English spelling system, this time in the newly founded United States of America (cf. Chapter 14, Chapter 29 and Chapter 30; see Part V, below). Once again, one wonders whether the model was to be based on American or London English?

Franklin: A Forgotten Phonetician

The first question that arises is why Franklin's RMS has attracted so little attention, especially during the last seventy years. My explanation is that, although linguists and non-linguists alike considered it interesting, they concluded that there was nothing of particular scientific value to it on account of its summary nature. However, having said that, I would add that one must be a phonetician to understand his script and the underlying system on which it was based. Otherwise, it makes little sense whatsoever. For instance, in his otherwise illuminating article on Franklin's RMS, Christopher Looby (1984, 23) describes it in the following terms: "But his failure to make a very thorough reform – this failure to really improve the alphabet at all – is another indication that the motives governing Franklin's reform of the alphabet were extralinguistic." In this, we shall see that he thoroughly is mistaken. Walter Isaacson, the author of a fascinating biography about Franklin, assumes the same and he actually pokes fun at his RMS.

He picked Polly (i.e. Stevenson) as his first potential convert to a new phonetic alphabet that he had invented in a quixotic quest to simplify English spelling. *It is easy to see why it did not catch on* (my italics). "*Kansider chis alfabet, and giv mi instances af syts Inlis wyrds and saunds az iu mee hink kannat perfektlyi bi eksprest byi it,*" went one of his more comprehensible sentences. After a long reply that is near impossible to translate, in which she halfheartedly says the alphabet "*myit bi uv syrvis,*" she lapses into standard English to conclude, "With ease & with sincerity, I can in the old way subscribe myself."¹

It was a measure of their intellectual bonding that Polly would indulge *this linguistic fantasy* as faithfully as she did. *Franklin's phonetic reform showed little of his usual regard for utility, and it took his passion for social improvement to radical extremes* (my italics)... (Isaacson, 2003, 220).

To be fair, all the scholars who have studied Franklin's RMS, from A. J. Ellis (1869) to C. Wise (1948), have drawn attention to its weaknesses. On the contrary, one

1 It is important to note here that Isaacson's reproduction of Franklin's script is thoroughly inaccurate, making its appearance here all the more absurd to the reader.

of the major goals of this book is to demonstrate its innovative, well-conceived foundations as well as the underlying scientific coherence of his alphabet. In Franklin's defence, one must never lose sight of the fact that he was first and foremost a professional printer, who had spent his early life typesetting and composing. Spelling was thus at the heart of his profession and, from the beginning of his apprenticeship at the age of twelve, he could not have failed to imagine how an orthographic reform would have had practical applications and benefits, the foremost among them being that a streamlined alphabet would have saved printers considerable time and money while simultaneously assisting the less privileged members of society.

Given that Franklin could speak or read four languages in addition to English, and had studied their orthographic systems as well, he had noticed that the concordance between the written and spoken word was far closer in, say, Italian and Spanish than in either English or French. One of the many arguments he proposed to Stevenson to justify his RMS was that, if the spelling of Latin had not been modernized, Italians today would be incapable of reading their own language. He made the same analogy in his second September 28, 1768 letter to Polly Stevenson, in which he alludes to the passage from Old English to William Caxton's late-15th-century modernization of English orthography. Now, he argued, was time to go one step further. As a professional printer, Franklin must have felt quite capable of following Caxton's example.

The passage that Isaacson cites above is taken from Franklin's formerly missing July 20, 1768 letter to Polly Stevenson. It remained in the archives of the American Philosophical Society (founded by Franklin 1744) for over a century and was brought to light in Willcox's 1972 edition. I have obtained permission to reproduce this letter along with his original 1768 consonant and vowel tables and descriptions, as well as Stevenson's September 26, 1768 manuscript response to his first July 20th letter (cf. Appendix 2). These original documents have never been available to any of the linguists who have studied the RMS previously. This is the first time they have ever been studied linguistically.

Although the aforementioned July 20th letter is absent from Vaughan's 1779 edition, he does include copies of the tables and correspondence drafted in 1768 that Franklin had sent to him, probably at some point in 1776 or 1777 (cf. Chapter 25). Although they are nearly identical, the original 1768 manuscript documents preserved by the American Philosophical Society contain a number of linguistic variants that are of crucial importance to our understanding of his phonological system, for instance, the pronunciation of 18th-century reflexes of ME /i:/.

Finally, all three transcribed letters highlight the views of both Stevenson and Franklin's prescriptive visions of what "correct" English should resemble in ways that have not been fully examined before (cf. Chapter 14 and Chapter 25). The fact that Stevenson was a native of Kensington is significant in the sense

that it allows for a comparative analysis of their transcriptions. This point is discussed in Part IV (Chapters 25 through 28).

Past Works on the RMS

Franklin's RMS has attracted some attention from linguists since the 18th century. The work that has devoted the most attention to it was Noah Webster's *Dissertations on the English Language*, who dedicated his book to Franklin, not only as a sign of respect but also, given the latter's immense status, in a bid to present himself as Franklin's successor and instigator of a new spelling reform for the young American Republic. The great English phonetician, Alexander J. Ellis, whose work greatly influenced Henry Sweet, one of the founders of the International Phonetic Association (cf. Synopsis and General Conclusions), studied Franklin's RMS in detail in his *On Early English Pronunciation, with Especial Reference to Shakspeare [sic] and Chaucer* (1869). In his article, "From Franklin to Lowell" (1899), the New England phonetician, Charles Grandgent, also devotes some attention to Franklin, but far more to Lowell. These men were among the few to take Franklin's reform seriously (cf. Chapter 25).

More informative, phonologically pertinent studies of Franklin's RMS were published during the first half of the 20th century. The first among these scholars was George Krapp, who made good use of Franklin's RMS in his *English Language in America* (1925, vol. 2), adding insightful conclusions about the nature of 18th-century colonial American English. These references, however, are scattered throughout his book and no systematic account of the RMS is presented. The second is William Angus, who wrote an informative ten-page article entitled, "Poor Richard's Alphabet and his pronunciation" (1935), in which he includes an IPA transcription of Franklin's second letter to Stevenson. Claude Wise (1948) wrote a twenty-one page phonetic analysis in his article "Benjamin Franklin as a Phonetician," which is by far the most detailed and valuable work ever undertaken on the subject. He too adds an IPA transcription of Franklin's second letter to Stevenson.

All in all, however, the underlying scientific value of Franklin's work has been overlooked. After the 1950s, interest in Franklin's RMS, and particularly what it might teach us about colonial English and its links to 18th-century British English, ceased altogether (cf. Chapter 25).

A Proto-Phonemic Orthography

Despite obvious gaps and occasional inaccuracies in his transcriptions, a closer investigation of his system reveals that he had put considerable thought in this project over the years and, from a phonetician's perspective, Franklin's scheme

is in fact perfectly logical and coherent in ways that have never been recognized. For the time, and despite its brevity, it presents a number of revolutionary contributions to phonetic science. For instance, I shall argue in Part IV that Franklin's choice of characters and his method of presenting the English vocalic system is based on a clear understanding of articulatory phonetics that was well ahead of his time. This aspect of his talents and insight as a phonetician has never been recognized as such. Indeed, elements of his system were adopted one hundred years later in the International Phonetic Alphabet.

From a theoretical perspective, one of Franklin's greatest contributions is to have imagined what I have called a "proto-phonemic" system. By "proto-phonemic," I mean that Franklin imagined an orthographic system founded on the principle that a given character should represent only one specific vocalic or consonantal sound functioning in contrastive distribution (i.e. phoneme). In so doing, to simplify his system, he may well have ignored what he considered to be minor allophonic distinctions between phonemes. In this sense, Kemp Malone, in his article entitled "Benjamin Franklin on the Spelling Reform" (1925), may not have been entirely wrong in asserting that Franklin had "done violence" to his system by limiting it to twenty-six characters. Nevertheless, Franklin's main objective was very precisely to conceive a concise, efficient orthographic system to assist children, the illiterate and foreigners to simultaneously learn to read in record time and pronounce words correctly.

The RMS: British English or American English?

In 2014, I wrote a fifty-eight-page article on Franklin's RMS entitled "Another Look at Benjamin Franklin's 1768 Reformed Mode of Spelling: Some Insights into the Genesis of American-English Pronunciation," which, at the suggestion of Joan Beal, I submitted to the *Transactions of the Philological Society*. My initial goal was to propose a phonological analysis and interpretation of each of Franklin's twenty-six characters in an effort to determine what this would reveal about his idiolect and contemporary English pronunciation. This article was judged to be of sufficient interest to expand into a monograph, at which point I submitted a proposal with a detailed plan of the contents. Following this, the two anonymous reviewers made very precise and helpful suggestions to improve the proposal and for which I wish to sincerely thank them here.

Pointedly, one of the reviewers asked the following question, namely, whether the focus of the book was on "American" or "British" English? The general consensus among American and English scholars who have studied his RMS was that Franklin's orthographic system reflected, with some nuances, his native Boston English pronunciation with possible influences from his long stays in Philadelphia and London. This opinion is based on the assumption that

the pronunciation of standard English speakers in America and England during the 18th century was virtually indistinguishable (Krapp, 1925). This was also my initial belief. But questions arise at this point. How can we know for certain whether his RMS reflects Franklin's idiolect or even his Boston English accent, especially considering that Franklin had already been living in London for nearly ten years when he drafted his treatise?

The reviewer's straightforward and outwardly simple question posed another conundrum I had not anticipated and I quickly realized that, if left unanswered, this question would block any serious investigation of Franklin's RMS. Determining the degree to which the RMS represents proto-RP (i.e. sophisticated London pronunciation circa 1800) as opposed to the way English was spoken in early America was an obvious priority. For Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) (cf. Glossary of Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Terminology).

The main problem confronting me in this regard was that the last complete, systematic study of early American historical phonology was undertaken by Krapp in his *The English Language in America* (vol. 2), nearly one hundred years ago. Although his work was based on the thorough exploitation of multiple primary sources dating to the 17th and 18th centuries, his work has been brushed aside by many modern linguists on account of his purportedly Anglo-centric orientations and conclusions referred to earlier. On the contrary, I consider Krapp's methodological approaches and conclusions to be fundamentally sound and worthy of re-examination. Michael Montgomery (2003, 15) expressed a similar opinion two decades ago.

Interest in basic description has waned considerably in research on early AE, partly as a result of emphasis on quantitative approaches, which consider narrowly circumscribed sets of variable features and deem others unworthy of examination. The long-term result of this is the lack of comprehensive works such as Krapp (1925) (*yet to be superseded for the history of American pronunciation, but badly needing updating*) (my italics).

A Turning Point

This led to another related question: did such a thing as "American English" exist in the 18th century and, if so, to what degree had it already diverged from the English spoken in the motherland? Furthermore, were Americans and Englishmen conscious of speaking different varieties of English during Franklin's lifetime? Was 18th-century North American English characterized by older features of pronunciations that may still have been common in the rural areas of England? If so, could American English be traced to any particular region of England? Or, on the contrary, did the developing colonial American English

variety mark a clear departure from British English? At the sociolinguistic level, I also wondered to what extent the variant realizations of Wells' lexical sets might have reflected social class distinctions? As intimated by Montgomery (1996), these questions have been judged by some historical linguists to be misguided and pointless.

In writing my initial article on Franklin's spelling reform, and as I studied Franklin's of his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* transcriptions in detail, I immediately noticed a number of inconsistencies, in particular with regard to his phonetic notations of the same words *perfektlɥi* ~ *pyrfektli*, *ynlarn'd* ~ *lyrn*, etc. which I concluded are variant dialectal pronunciations (cf. Part IV for analysis). Strangely, a substantial number of these kinds of variant forms were never identified or discussed in previous studies. Furthermore, I also noticed that these deviant transcriptions are scattered throughout the transcribed letters and tend to be more conservative than the pronunciations that were then in vogue in London during the last quarter of the 18th century. The first question that came to my mind was whether these occasional hesitations reflected his own "Americanisms" that he had absentmindedly transcribed or were they simply commonly shared dialectal pronunciations that he had picked up in and around London during his fifteen-year stay there?

As explained above, in my attempt to find answers to these questions, I had no choice but to undertake my own study of early American phonology. This obliged me to expand the scope of this study far beyond the limits I had originally set for this monograph. Accomplishing this task entailed two phases. The first was to imagine the theoretical and methodological approaches and tools that would permit me to reconstruct what I now consider to be multiple colonial American "koinés" (new, mixed English dialectal varieties), not only one (cf. Part II).

The second phase was to collect and exploit the linguistic information obtained in a detailed, systematic manner. This was the goal of Part III, entitled the "Genesis of American English." This endeavour mushroomed into one of the longest and most detailed sections of the book. The data accumulated here provides the necessary comparative evidence required to fully understand the nature of Franklin's RMS.

In so doing, and in response to Montgomery remarks cited above, my aim here has been to meaningfully contribute to interpreting and advancing aspects of Krapp's pioneering work, but also to exploit the data furnished by Anders Orbeck's 1927 excellent study of the town records of four 17th-century Massachusetts parishes.

The RMS: A London-Based Model?

As my research progressed, particularly after more and more linguistic evidence was accumulated in Parts III and IV (cf. below), it became increasingly obvious to me that the New England phonological system was indeed significantly different and generally more conservative than the speech heard in cultivated London circles during Franklin's stay there. I concluded that his RMS was far closer to the latter than to the former. But why?

It was only when I discovered Franklin's (formerly missing) July 20, 1768 letter that I finally found firm evidence, in Franklin's own words, that revealed his true intentions. In this letter, he solicits Polly Stevenson's assistance to help him make necessary amendments to "*such English words and Sounds as you may think cannot perfectly be expressed by it* (i.e. his RMS)," that is to say, to help him identify and correct aspects of his alphabet that did not reflect current London English pronunciation. If his Boston speech had been identical to cultivated London English, why would he have needed Stevenson's help? This important letter demonstrates that Polly Stevenson, a native of Kensington, London, was not only an active collaborator in the conception of his scheme but that Franklin considered her to be a full partner in this endeavour. Until now, she has never been given credit for her contributions. The evidence strongly suggests that she also served as Franklin's primary informant.

As the linguistic picture gradually came into focus, other corroborating evidence came to light that convinced me that Franklin's objective was to codify a model of pronunciation for his RMS that would be based, not on his Boston, Philadelphia-modified English pronunciation, but rather on what he viewed to be refined London English. In Chapter 30, I discuss the possibility that this may have provoked some tension with Noah Webster who clearly had a far more nationalistic "American" vision for the English language in America, but not in the way we normally imagine. Quite the contrary.

A Unifying Theme

The major theme that unifies this book is the manner in which social class belonging has determined our judgements regarding language propriety and how, in turn, this has created barriers along class lines that have separated speakers and speech communities for hundreds of years (Chapter 1 and Chapter 10). In short, sociolinguistic hierarchies are mirror images of social hierarchies that structure society. The fact that the most prestigious varieties have always been spoken by the those at the higher end of the social ladder is not fortuitous. It is their varieties, regardless of the European language concerned and, for that matter those far beyond our regions, that have been the basis of the prescriptive

models in most regions of the world.

Despite the recency of sociolinguistics as a discipline, this hierarchical vision of language has been with us for over a millennium and certainly beyond.

Structure and Presentation

On account of the wide scope of this book and the range of topics broached, it has been divided into two volumes which are respectively titled:

Volume I: Language, Literacy and Social Mobility in Franklin's World

Volume II: Colonial American Voices and London Norms: Franklin's Quest for an Orthographic Reform

Volume I is composed of two main parts: Part I. The Sociohistorical and Sociolinguistic Origins of Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (Chapters 1–9) and Part II. Theoretical and Methodological Foundations (Chapters 10–15).

Part I. The Sociohistorical and Sociolinguistic Origins of Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (Chapters 1–9)

Considering the plethora of excellent biographies that have been published by literally scores of authors, some of whom have devoted their lives to the study of Franklin's life and accomplishments, when the Philosophical Society reviewers asked me to provide contextualization regarding Franklin's life and times, I feared that I would be merely echoing what had been said previously. This first volume is devoted to fulfilling their request. Nevertheless, unlike most biographers, my intention was not to relate his achievements as a statesman, philosopher, inventor or founding father, which has been the focus of most books, but rather to investigate aspects of Franklin's personal history and that are relevant to understanding the development and significance of his orthographic reform. In this respect, his views on the importance of the English language have tended to be glossed over.

Part I begins with a discussion of the humble origins of Franklin's family in 16th-century England and their defiant stance against the monarchy in defence of their dissident religious principles. It is this concern for religious freedom, coupled with the desire for a better life, that led Franklin's father and brother to leave England and settle in Massachusetts. The first half of Part I (Chapters 1–5) is thus dedicated to investigating this dimension of Franklin's life story.

Franklin's early education as well as his experiences as a printer's apprentice are marked by his compulsive quest to acquire knowledge of all kinds. Central to this is his obsession with mastering both formal spoken and written English,

which he viewed as a vehicle for social promotion and economic advancement. Indeed, the fact that he selected Addison and Steele's London-based *Spectator* for linguistic emulation sheds considerable light on his opinions about English language propriety. At a time when Great Britain was structured in a strictly regulated class system, Franklin was fully conscious of the non-standard linguistic features that identified speakers belonging to the lower strata. His *Reformed Mode of Spelling* was designed as a tool to erase these social inequities. In short, reading and writing standard English were the keys to upward social mobility. My working hypothesis throughout this book is that the model for his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* was inspired by cultivated London English, not Boston or Philadelphia English as has previously been assumed.

Franklin's passionate efforts to improve the level of literacy of his fellow citizens can be seen in the creation of the first lending libraries, the foundation of the Philadelphia Academy (later the University of Pennsylvania) and the Philosophical Society (now the American Philosophical Society). Franklin's personal code of ethics (a fusion of Puritan, deist and Enlightenment principles) are also key factors in understanding his altruistic undertakings and at the heart of which was his commitment to find practical ways to improve the lives of those who were less fortunate.

The second half (Chapters 6-9) focuses on Franklin's political engagement in favour of Whig ideals and his desire to serve his community in practical ways. In Chapter 6, for instance, we examine Franklin's dual English-American identity. Much as a person from Dorset or Somerset considers himself to be fully English, Franklin also viewed his Americanness and Englishness as being inseparable. It is sometimes forgotten that, until he was nearly seventy, he tirelessly fought to maintain America within the British Empire. He was thoroughly convinced that American colonies would be the source of Britain's future wealth and greatness in the following century. In this discussion we explore the conflict between his genuine love for England, the Empire and English culture and his slow but progressive Americanization over a thirty-year period roughly spanning the years from 1745 to 1775.

As relations rapidly deteriorated between the Parliament and the colonial American legislatures on issues concerning taxation and representation during the 1760s and early 1770s, Franklin's hostility towards the monarchy and its Tory allies grew in intensity. I argue that this growing rift provoked an increasing sense of cultural and political "Americanness" among an important segment of the colonial population. Importantly, this identity had nothing to do with ideas we normally associate with modern American nationalism but, rather, with Franklin's and his compatriots' commitment to Whiggism. I remain convinced that this was certainly not a rejection of England or Great Britain, its people, culture or ideas of linguistic propriety. Paradoxically, in this context, I

see the “American Revolution” to be a second “Glorious Revolution,” a struggle during which many of the ideals of those challenging the Monarchy and its allies in the previous century were finally implemented. At the heart of his struggle was his commitment to defending the English Constitution and the English Bill of Rights (1689), a document which later served as a blueprint for the American Bill of Rights (1791). This is a detail many Americans forget. For all of these reasons, I argue that the causes for Franklin’s steady “Americanization” were thus eminently political, not cultural.

Closely bound to this is whether the bloody and bitter War of Independence affected his long-held adherence a London-based English language model for the subjects of the British Empire, including Americans. Looby (1984, 1996) has contended that it certainly did and that Franklin’s *Reformed Mode of Spelling* was an attempt to imagine a new model of language propriety based on American English. This question is discussed in detail in Part V of Volume 2.

Part II. Theoretical and Methodological Foundations (Chapters 10-15)

The second part of Volume I presents the theoretical foundations on which Parts III and IV are based and it explores an array of theoretical tools and methodologies borrowed from creolistics, dialectology, sociolinguistics and diachronic linguistics. Furthermore, over forty years of fieldwork on micro-varieties of Breton, a Celtic language spoken in the West of Brittany by mainly illiterate speakers (i.e. illiterate in their native language, but not French), taught me long ago that linguistic variety, at all imaginable levels of language, is the rule while standard varieties are often idealized constructions imagined and instituted by socially dominant elements of the population. While this observation is obvious to any sociolinguist or dialectologist, this experience caused me to reinterpret my view of the historical development of English varieties and I am persuaded that the same kind of chaotic dialectal picture once characterized the spoken varieties of Middle English and Early Modern English (cf. Chapter 10). My own studies of English and American varieties have suggested this while investigations of sources such as the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English* (2013) confirm it.

In this sense, I very much share the ideas expressed by Jim Milroy (2000, 11) who argued that the linguistic history of English we have been taught is, in many respects, “partly a false picture – one in which the history of the language as a whole is very largely the story of the development of modern Standard English and not of its manifold varieties.” He goes on to express that this amounts to the constitution of a “standard ideology.” I shall return to this point on multiple occasions as I attempt to demonstrate that that this “ideology” has warped our

views about the diverse ways the English language developed, not only in Great Britain but also in America. In particular, I address a stereotypic idea held by many in both England and America, that American English has drifted away from a “purer” form of English spoken in the motherland (i.e. the RP/grammatical standard) and is thus a corrupt or degenerated form of English. Although this view is widely held, even in North America, this portrayal is inaccurate and presents a distortion of linguistic reality

Unfortunately, both English and American linguistic nationalists have contributed to this unnecessary conflict, a conflict which finds its origins in the years following the foundation of the United States (cf. Chapter 30, Volume II). Central to our discussion of colonial English are concepts elaborated by Salikoko Mufwene, such as the “founder generation” and the “feature pool” as well as a number of my own concepts, most notable of which are the “sharedness principle” and the notion of “phonetic ranges” which, I believe, are central to understanding the fragmented nature of the early dialectal linguistic data, both in 17th- and 18th-century England and colonial America (definitions in Chapters 10 through 12).

From a broader sociolinguistic perspective, I adopt a bottom-up approach to language. One of my main priorities has been to identify, wherever possible, the nature of the low-status varieties as they were once spoken. Time after time, the tendency since the 16th century has been for once stigmatized linguistic features to resurface, after a few generations, in the language of polite society, as it was called in the 18th century. The irony is that RP English has, in many respects, evolved further away from older English varieties than GA, which has remained closer to proto-RP in many respects (cf. Chapter 15, cf. passages from the recordings of Franklin’s RMS transcriptions).

Secondly, for all the reasons that have been stated here, I do not consider the English language to constitute a single (phonological, morphological, syntactical and lexical) entity. This becomes patently clear when examining the Great Vowel Shift on one hand and the evolution of individual English and Scottish dialects on the other. Rather, I view each variety and sub-variety as important components of a whole. Importantly, each of these has its own social and diachronic history. In this book, one of the consequences of this approach is that I argue attributing dates to English sound shifts is misleading since some varieties are more innovative or conservative than others. I believe it is far safer and more accurate to view language change within a broad temporal, social and geolinguistic context with overlapping patterns of change.

Expressed another way, phonological systems are strictly bound to individual speech communities, and this explains why language change occurs at different rates of speed, often in unexpected directions, depending on the speaker’s dialectal origins and social status. For reasons expressed in Chapters 10, 11,

12 and 15, I consider that adopting a phonemic approach makes little sense when dealing with multiple dialects for the simple reason that doing so implies underlying linguistic unity. Simply put, a phoneme in one variety of English may not be in another (cf. Shorrocks, 1998, 182). It is hoped that the theoretical foundations and methodological approaches outlined and adopted in Part II will provide adequate tools to identify and compare with greater precision the 17th- and 18th-century London and New England English varieties discussed in Parts III and IV.

Part III: A Historical Phonology of Colonial New England English: “Probing under the Iceberg” (Chapters 16-24)

The subject matter analyzed in Part III presented one of the greatest challenges of this book, namely, identifying what Franklin’s native New England/Philadelphia-coloured accent resembled prior to his coming to England in 1757.

Beal (1999, 14-15) remarked that American linguists have tended to investigate English sources only insofar as the features that interest them correlate directly with the development of American English. Pyles and Algeo (1982), for instance, see the 18th century as the beginning of American English and so pay little attention to developments in earlier colonial American English or in 17th-century British English.

Taking a cue from Beal, I decided to undertake a systematic, comparative review of both early English and American vocalic and consonantal systems which reveals not only differences but, to a remarkable extent, a broad range of highly interesting and shared features. More specifically, this has been accomplished by examining the descriptions of English vowels and consonants provided by English orthoepists between the 16th and 18th centuries and comparing them with phonetic data retrieved from 17th-century New England and New York town records. To my knowledge, Part III is the first study to systematically compare and contrast the British and American linguistic data throughout the entire colonial period. This is significant considering that Franklin’s older paternal family members were born in Northamptonshire during the second half of the 17th century. The impact of their speech on his must thus be taken seriously into consideration as well as the fact that he was born in 1706.

Globally, and as might be expected, the correlations between these two sources of contemporary evidence are extremely informative. Quite frequently, they permitted the identification of regional English characteristics that were also present in the colonial American English “feature pool.” This information was collated and analyzed in conjunction with thousands of rhyme schemes obtained from Franklin’s own poems (in over 3,000 lines of poetry, mainly

from his *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1719, 1733-1758)). Significantly, his rhymes provide us with highly detailed evidence about the nature of his pronunciation before moving to London to serve as a colonial agent (1758-1775). This is the first time such a study has ever been undertaken.

As a control, I included the results of comparative studies of two contemporary New England poets, Joel Barlow of Connecticut and Timothy Dwight of Massachusetts. Although they are nearly fifty years younger than Franklin, their rhymes reveal the same general patterns and characteristics as his. This, I believe, is one of the methodological innovations in this study that has yielded the most precise data about Franklin's idiolect and the more formal register of the early Massachusetts English.

Finally, I have included a large array of supporting evidence from 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century English and American dialect studies. These also serve as scientific controls of another type and offer key insights into the genesis of not only New England English but also how the colonial American English varieties evolved more generally, both in the North and South. When all the above data are collated, compared and studied closely, they shed precious light on Franklin's native speech and that of his fellow New Englanders.

The data obtained in Part III permit the identification of many key variables that composed the New England feature pool. More specifically, ascertaining the "phonetic ranges," that is, an array of possible pronunciations for each of Wells' key words, proved to be extremely helpful in providing a clearer picture of 17th- and 18th-century New England English phonology than has hitherto been possible. One of the inevitable questions is why certain variables were favoured while others were rejected over time. The answer to such questions is eminently sociolinguistic and is explained in Chapters 10, 11 and 12 in Volume I.

I shall argue that, by and large, the phonological traits associated with colonial American English are confined to English varieties south of a line drawn from Preston, Lancashire to Hull, Yorkshire. More specifically, the bulk of the linguistic evidence favours areas of the East Midlands, and the Southeast and Southwest of England, in that order.

Part IV. Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (1768-1779) (Chapters 25-28)

Armed with the mass of information collected in Part III, we are now able to study Franklin's RMS in a systematic fashion. The first part of Part IV consists of:

- a detailed outline and presentation of the contents of the RMS;
- a study of Stevenson's and Franklin's letters and their sociolinguistic implications;

- a discussion about Benjamin Vaughan’s political motivations for publishing Franklin’s writings;
- a detailed comparison of the elements of the 1768 version of the RMS and that presented in Vaughan’s 1779 edition;
- an outline of all the previous linguistic studies of the RMS...

The main focus of Part IV is a synchronic phonetic presentation of Franklin’s RMS, accompanied by a further diachronic and dialectological analysis of each of Franklin’s twenty-six proto-phonemic characters. Wherever pertinent, the data are systematically compared with the 17th- and 18th-century English or American dialectal evidence that was collected in Part III.

In accordance with the older orthoepistic tradition of “one sound for one letter,” this section also includes a discussion about the six new characters that Franklin designed to replace English digraphs and that he had cast in 1768 at Watts’ Printing House in London. I also present the IPA equivalents of each of his characters.

This is followed by a study identifying the New Englandisms (cf. Chapter 28) that appear inadvertently in his RMS transcriptions. I argue that the fact that these isolated variables conform well with the phonological system identified for 18th-century New England hopefully serve as reinforcing evidence that:

- a. the data accumulated in Part III is accurate and representative;
- b. his RMS is fundamentally, but not wholly, based on London-English.

As further evidence of this, Part IV terminates with a detailed comparative outline of the major characteristics of his native New England phonological system and the more innovative, proto-phonemic model that is recorded in his RMS (cf. Chapter 28).

Part V. Franklin’s Linguistic Legacy (Chapters 29-30)

Part V consists of a relatively short discussion of Franklin’s legacy as a phonetician and orthoepist. Considering that I have identified several early 16th- and 17th-century English orthoepists whose work Franklin consulted and whose linguistic approaches he followed, I argue that Franklin is only one in a long line of unsuccessful spelling reformers presented in Chapter 13 of Volume I. In particular, I discuss Franklin’s direct influence on two important figures. The first is his good friend and fellow Whig, Sir William Jones, who claims to have read Franklin’s RMS. This is borne out by evidence found in his classic treatise, “A Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters” in 1786. This publication is widely viewed as marking the beginning of Indo-European studies as well as modern comparative and historical linguistics. In this sense,

it is a founding document. I provide evidence that Franklin had direct or, at the very least, indirect influence on Jones's own phonetic system (cf. Chapter 29).

While everyone acknowledges Noah Webster's role as the father of American English orthography, Franklin's central role in this endeavour has been thoroughly occulted. In Chapters 29 and 30, I discuss the meetings between the two men as well as the many ways Franklin's influence on Webster can be discerned throughout Webster's *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789). There are also strong indications that the two men may not have seen eye-to-eye regarding the nature of the model of pronunciation for Americans. In this respect, it is not absolutely clear whether Franklin was entirely willing to abandon his older London-based model of pronunciation, an idea which would have angered the young patriot Webster. One must ask whether the bitter feelings Franklin harboured for English ruling elites following the American Revolution pushed him to adopt at least some of Webster's ideas about codifying a new "American" national model based on New England English?

Considering the evidence accumulated in Parts I and II (Volume I) and Parts IV and V (Volume II), I have found few signs that Franklin would have adhered to such an idea (cf. Chapter 30). Part V terminates with a discussion which reveals that, following the Revolution, many of America's best educated men remained, in many ways, culturally bound to England, particularly in terms of language and culture. Indeed, political and religious independence were considered to be quite separate issues from linguistic correctness. For this class of men, Webster's declaration of linguistic independence from Great Britain and the idea of the creation of a national American linguistic model were greeted by most as a rather excentric and absurd endeavour. Indeed, throughout the 19th century an important segment of the American intellectual class stubbornly held on to the idea that the proto-RP London English should also be their standard. This anglophile view of language propriety lay at the heart of the so-called dictionary war pitting Webster against Worcester, an ideological struggle that continued throughout most of the 19th century. The English mode of pronunciation persisted in America until the first quarter of the 20th century.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (Vaughan, 1779, 467-478). This appendix includes the entire facsimile of Benjamin Vaughan's 1779 edition of. The permission to reproduce this document was granted by the Internet Archive, University of California Digital Library, Hathitrust. It includes:

- Benjamin Vaughan's introduction to Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling*;

- a synthetic presentation of three vowel and consonant tables outlining Franklin's RMS (pp. 468, 470a, 470b);
- two stanzas of Addison's "The Campaign" composed in 1704 and transcribed by Franklin in his RMS;
- Polly Stevenson's September 26, 1768, critical account of Franklin's RMS. It is a response to his formerly missing July 20, 1768, letter which is absent from Vaughan's edition (cf. Appendix 2). Her letter is transcribed in his new orthography.
- Franklin's September 28, 1768, response to Stevenson's letter, also entirely transcribed in the RMS. In it he presents a lengthy series of counterarguments to Stevenson's criticisms (Vaughan's 1779 edition, University of California Digital Library, Internet Archive, Hathitrust).

The contents of these documents are outlined in Chapter 25. Chapters 26-28 consist of detailed analyses of Franklin's orthographic scheme and its scientific innovations.

Appendix 2: Benjamin Franklin and Polly Stevenson's RMS correspondence. The American Philosophical Society (founded by Franklin in 1743-1744) has granted me permission to reproduce the digitized versions of the following manuscript documents.

- Franklin's July 20, 1768, letter written in his own hand (an extract of which is quoted by Isaacson, referred to above) in which he asks for Polly Stevenson's assistance in amending his RMS. Source: American Philosophical Society, Islandora Repository, Mss.B.F85, James S. and Frances M. Bradford Collection.
- The original condensed manuscript version of Franklin's vowel and consonant table which presents his proto-phonemic system, including six new characters. (In his 1779 edition, Benjamin Vaughan breaks it down into three separate tables.) This is accompanied by his descriptions of each character. It is thought that this table was posted to Polly Stevenson along with his July 20th letter. I have found a number of discrepancies between this early version and the published 1779 version.
- Polly Stevenson's September 26, 1768 (draft?) letter in which she gives her negative appraisal of Franklin's RMS. Source: American Philosophical Society, Islandora Repository, Mss.B.F85, James S. and Frances M. Bradford Collection.
- For comparative purposes, I have included Vaughan's 1779 version of this letter. I have identified nine orthographic differences between

this original 1768 version and the 1779 version edited by Vaughan. These distinctions suggest possible variant pronunciations. Source: University of California Digital Library, Internet Archive, Hathitrust.

- The American Philosophical Society reference librarians have informed me that Franklin’s manuscript version of this September 28, 1768 manuscript letter to Stevenson has been lost.

To assist the reader, I have included an IPA transcription of each letter. The IPA transcriptions reflect Franklin’s original system, and I have made no attempt to modify or adapt the transcriptions. This is the first time that either Vaughan’s 1779 edition or the 1768 manuscript documents have ever been published.

Appendix 3: A glossary of Franklin and Stevenson’s RMS transcriptions. A glossary containing 442 words extracted from Franklin’s RMS presentation, Addison’s “The Campaign” (1704) and Franklin and Stevenson’s correspondence. Each word is presented in Franklin and Stevenson’s RMS spellings and is accompanied by my IPA transcriptions. GA equivalents are also included for comparative purposes.

Appendix 4: This includes the epistolary exchanges between Franklin and Webster from May 1786 to the end of December 1789, four months before Franklin’s death. Given that Webster’s letters have never been published until now, the reader will be able to follow their discussions in chronological sequence for the first time. For Franklin’s three letters, source: National Archives, Founders Online; for Noah Webster’s four letters, source: American Philosophical Society Archives, Franklin Papers.

A Glossary of Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Terminology: This section includes a non-exhaustive list of definitions and explanations about the technical vocabulary used in this book.

Recorded Passages of Franklin’s Poems and Extracts from his RMS: The author has provided recordings of six short poems taken from Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, all composed between 1735 and 1757. The accent recorded here is based on the linguistic findings presented in Part III of Volume II. The six poems that have been selected were composed between 1733 and 1758 and reveal characteristics of early New England pronunciation. In some respects, it exhibits Type C1 pronunciations of the late 17th century (cf. Chapter 15, Part II, Volume I). This should not be surprising considering that he was born in 1706.

These poems are to be contrasted with a selection of extracts taken from his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*. These reflect the proto-phonemic model of pronunciation Franklin intended which, I argue, were inspired by cultivated London speech during the time he lived in Kensington. Two selections have

been chosen. The first is Franklin's transcription of Addison's poem entitled "The Campaign" (1704) celebrating Lord Marlborough's victory at Blenheim over Louis XIV's forces. This is followed by the reading of a prose passage taken from Franklin's September 28th response to Polly Stevenson's criticisms of his RMS (cf. Chapter 25).

The reader may be struck, as was the author, by the impression that the model of pronunciation conceived for the RMS is, in a number of respects, more akin to contemporary GA than to current RP. If this is more than just an impression, this would suggest linguistic continuity between GA and RP with the former representing a slightly older standard model of English (i.e. proto-RP). The recordings are available at: <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0470#resources> and <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0537#resources>

PART I.

THE SOCIOHISTORICAL AND
SOCIOLINGUISTIC ORIGINS OF FRANKLIN'S
REFORMED MODE OF SPELLING

CONTEXTUALIZATION I

Introduction to Part I

Rather than recounting Franklin's well-known accomplishments as a statesman, inventor, or philosopher, Part I places Benjamin Franklin's life within the sociohistorical, sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts that provide a better understanding of the ideological influences that inspired him to undertake a host of altruistic projects to improve the well-being of his fellow citizens.

The discussion begins with a belief system known as the Great Chain of Being that has structured the world order of the West since the early Christian era. Founded on the notion of a pecking order, depending on their position along a vertical social axis, this system has determined our views on the status and social worth of human beings but also the value of the forms of language they speak.

The first topic Franklin addresses in his *Autobiography* is his humble family background reaching back to 16th-century Northamptonshire and their Protestant religious principles. Here Franklin reveals his obvious pride in their opposition to the political and religious abuse of the monarchy. We examine the causes that motivated the migration of his family to Massachusetts during the 17th century in search of religious and political freedom. His family's commitment to Whig politics and constitutional liberties can be seen as a direct challenge to the established power structure that dominated society and that had kept the people in poverty and ignorance. Inspired by the English Bill of Rights (1688), on which the United States Bill of Rights (1791) was later based, these views shaped Franklin's values and those of many of his compatriots.

We discover that Franklin's ethical outlook is thus a blending of Puritan discipline, Deist rationalism, and Enlightenment practicality. This further explains his reformist impulses. Paradoxically, perhaps, he regarded literacy and the mastery of standard English, the language of the elites, as essential tools for self-improvement and civic equality for all people, starting with the most vulnerable. He firmly believed that education was the key to erasing class barriers. This conviction underpinned his later initiatives to such as the creation of lending libraries, the foundation of the Publick Academy of Philadelphia (later the University of Pennsylvania) and the American Philosophical Society. His *Reformed Mode of Spelling* should be understood as part of a much broader

humanitarian project aimed at making education more accessible and empowering ordinary people.

Directly tied to these ambitions, Chapter 6 through 9 examines Franklin's political engagement, namely, to guarantee the physical and political protection of his fellow citizens. It is in the context of the French and Indian Wars that he believed the seeds of the American War of Independence were sown and the Part I will explore the context and causes for his slow but steady "Americanization."

As political tensions with the King's Privy Council and the House of Lords intensified over issues of taxation (resulting from the war with France) and the lack of political representation in London, he clearly perceived the utter disdain in which the colonials were viewed, yet another manifestation of the Great Chain of Being. Only then did a stronger sense of American cultural and political distinctiveness begin to arise, not in a nationalist sense that would be understood today, but grounded in radical Whig adhesion to the principles of the English Bill of Rights.

Convinced that the British colonies of North America would guarantee the spread of English culture, language and the demographic expansion of the English people across that continent (i.e. an early expression of Manifest Destiny), Franklin saw America as the source of England's future prosperity and greatness. In this context, we discover the details regarding his English-American identity and the fact that, until the very end of his stay in London as a colonial agent in London, vainly defending the rights of the colonists, he remained deeply loyal to the British Empire, if not to the royal authorities, until war finally broke out in Massachusetts in 1775.

The foundation of a political institution in which the principles of justice and evolution, rather than simple nationalism, was thus at the very heart of his sense of "Americanness." This raises important questions about how his changing loyalties influenced his views on the English language propriety. More specifically, did he come to reject his heteronomous views on London English as a linguistic model in the same way as Noah Webster, who overtly called for an American "linguistic declaration of independence" (cf. Chapters 29 and 30)?

This book focuses on the origins and nature of early American phonology, and the identification of the details concerning Franklin's natural idiolect. Until now, all scholars have assumed that his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* reflects his own native accent. On the contrary, I shall try to demonstrate that he remained loyal to the idea of a London English linguistic model for Americans. This will be the topic of the rest of this book.

Section 1. Dissident Culture, Religion and Politics: Franklin's Life Story

1. Social and Sociolinguistic Stratification in England: The Seeds of a Popular Revolt (1357-1689)

The Courtier disdaineth the citizen;

The citizen the countryman;

The shoemaker the cobbler.

But un-fortunate is the man who does not have anyone he can look down upon.
(attributed to Tomas Nash, 1593)

Introduction

Franklin grew up in a complex, unstable colonial society that was marked by radical religious and social transformation. Part I of this book focuses on three main areas of Franklin's life that are not generally the subjects of concentration in most of the biographies devoted to him. The first concerns his family's English cultural heritage and their integration into colonial Boston society. The second theme concerns the impact of organized religion and, later, Deism and natural philosophy, in fashioning a uniquely personal metaphysical vision which he never abandoned. It is this that is at the heart of his social engagement and explains his many altruistic endeavours.

This heritage, combined with his ethical code, also explain his political commitment to fight for the principles enshrined in the English Bill of Rights which drove him to defend the common people (English and American) from the abuses of what he viewed as an increasingly authoritarian monarchy. This last theme is the subject of the second half of Part I. The way these themes are tied to views on language propriety are inherent to this discussion.

Chapter 1 presents a general framework that helps explain the worldviews and belief systems of Franklin's generation. More specifically, much of this book rests on the origins and effects of the "Great Chain of Being," an ideology that, in many respects, has determined the hierarchical manner in which human society

is still structured today. Social, cultural and religious aspects of this vision are still with us and the way it has conditioned our judgement regarding language varieties is one of the underlying themes uniting this book. Its sociolinguistic impact is all pervasive.

Chapters 2 through 5 provide an overview of Franklin's childhood and education. I also outline his early career and rise to social and political prominence as well as the philosophical and religious motivations that led him to undertake so many philanthropic projects (including his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*).

Chapters 6 through 9 highlight the ways in which Franklin's political views and personal moral code led him to commit himself to defending the rights of his fellow colonials in the face of the British monarchy's obdurate refusal to grant them a voice in Parliament. From his zealous belief in the expansion of the British Empire (with the American colonies at its centre, these four chapters trace Franklin's slowly shifting sense of identity and loyalties and his growing disenchantment with the monarchy and its allies as they sought to whittle away the gains made during the Glorious Revolution of 1688. It is the intransigence of the monarchy on this and other points, especially to adhere to the principles outlined in the English Bill of Rights, which finally pushed Franklin and the other American Whigs to found an independent American republic.

In this chapter, we shall see the extent to which the political, cultural and linguistic situation in 18th-century America is enmeshed in earlier English social history.

1. The Great Chain of Being

Throughout the early Middle Ages, the structure of European societies rested upon an ideology known as the *scala naturae* or what Arthur Lovejoy (1936) called the "Great Chain of Being" (cf. Alexander Pope's poem below). In very simple terms, this was the belief that the universe is structured in a perfectly-ordered hierarchical configuration composed of eternal, immaterial spiritual beings at the top, inferior human mortals below them, followed by animate creatures, plants and vegetation. Below these came inanimate entities, each having a pre-ordained place in a vertically-structured cosmic framework.

Since classical times, the place of mankind¹ in this scheme has been the subject

1 Throughout this book I have used the word "man" and "mankind" with the Old English meaning of "male or female," i.e. "human being." "Wer" (related to Latin *vir*) was the original Old English word for the masculine sex (preserved in "werewolf"), *wifman*, the original form of "woman," simply meant a human being capable of bearing children. Furthermore, my use of the pronouns "he, his and him" are used in this generic sense (wherever the context lends itself) with the meaning of "either male or female."

of passionate philosophical and metaphysical debate. The earliest manifestation of this idea is thought to begin with Plato, who postulated that the world is a living entity and that it is endowed with, literally, a “world soul” (*psychè kósmou* or *anima mundi*) which is spiritually related to every living being.

Aristotle, in his *Inquiries on Animals* (*Ton peri ta zoia historion*), or *Historia Animalium*, contributed to this vision by conceiving the universe to be “eternal” and by distinguishing between animate and inanimate entities. For instance, while all “plants” and “animals” are living creatures and possess *anima* (spiritual essence), only mankind possesses reason and rationality which places him at the top of the hierarchical scheme of animate beings.

The Neo-Platonists, one of the most important being Plotinus (205-270), added refinements to this vision by conceiving three hypostatic realities: “the One,” “*logos*” and “*psyche*.” The “One,” the idea of a timeless entity encapsulating existence and non-existence which could be characterized by “goodness,” and which he saw as one of the components of what Lovejoy called the “principle of plenitude.” The latter described this principle as follows: “The perfection of the Absolute Being must be an intrinsic attribute, a property inherent in the Idea of it” (Lovejoy 1936: 34). Plotinus was not a Christian, however, and rejected the interpretation of the “One” as the “Creator” of the universe per se, but rather, he argued that from the “One” was eternal and ungenerated, without beginning or end, and that emanated “intellect” or “rational understanding” (i.e. *logos*), and the “soul” (*psyche*).

These Neo-Platonic concepts were reinterpreted and codified in Christian terms by St. Augustine (354-430) for whom the “One” incarnated omniscient all-powerful God who was, in and of Himself, the embodiment of “goodness” but also the Creator of the universe and all beings and things in it.

This concept was given new life by St. Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274) who refined many former theological concepts while elaborating a complex hierarchical model consisting of spiritual as well as animate and inanimate physical entities which he classifies along a superior to inferior axis. Yet, Aquinas’ vision of this hierarchy was much kinder than is generally imagined in that he believed that the “work of a king,” at the top of this scheme, should be to ensure “the greater good” of all those under his authority. “If God acknowledges the good works of individuals, how much more must those who make a whole province rejoice in peace, who hinder violence, who serve justice, who with their laws and precepts determine what persons should do, receive human praise and be rewarded by God” (cf. Wren, 2007, 34; see the conclusion to Chapter 9, in particular the references to St Thomas as being “the first Whig”).

Until the end of the 18th century, this medieval Christian portrayal of the universe dominated not only religious thought but also “natural philosophy” (what we now call “science”), the two being inseparable at this time. Importantly,

this hierarchical vision determined the social order of humanity in the Western world and, hence, our perception of the varieties of language spoken by each social group according to its position in this hierarchy.

For centuries, this vision was manifested by a static, caste-like system in which God or the Creator of the universe was at the very pinnacle of this chain of existence and controlled every dimension of it. Just below God were nine orders or “choirs” of angels, each divided into three subgroups of three. According to some interpretations, the least illustrious of these were the archangels (meaning “chief messengers of God”) and angels (“messengers of God”). These last two orders of angels had the capacity to communicate with mankind with the Archangels, Michael and Gabriel being best known for their special missions as intercessors between God and mankind.

The angels are thus lofty, purely spiritual beings but, under them comes mankind who is endowed with both an immaterial spiritual nature, with rational mind and an immortal soul, which binds him to the angels and to God Himself. However, human beings are also physical beings with a corporeal and sensual existence. This binds them to the animal world, hence man’s lower instincts against which he must struggle to achieve moral and spiritual perfection and, hence, be closer to God. There is much of this in Franklin’s *Art of Virtue* which he wrote at the age of twenty (Chapter 4).

Furthermore, in the medieval scheme of things, there were two parallel orders of mankind, one temporal and the other secular. This resulted in a dual socio-political structure which has survived until the present day. In a Western European context, the former is headed by the Pope, still viewed by the Catholics as Christ’s highest representative on earth. He, in turn, is at the summit of a holy pecking order of *oratores* consisting of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests on down to the lower ranked members of the clergy. The secular order, the *bellatores* (the warrior class), was headed by the king and/or queen who ruled over their princes, dukes, marquises, earls, counts, viscounts, barons and their female counterparts.

Below this first order of humanity, but socially separate from these governing elites, were the higher orders of commoners composed of free land-owning men and women, the yeomanry, but also merchants and tradesmen followed by skilled artisans, craftsmen and the like.

These were followed by the *laboratores* who composed the overwhelming mass of humanity, that is, poor, unfree serfs who were bound to their noble or clerical masters throughout their lives with little hope of ever escaping their condition of servitude. Nevertheless, even this class or, more accurately, caste, was structured in a similar hierarchical scheme with domestics in the manor houses or clerical institutions being viewed as privileged in comparison to the simple field hands who toiled their lives away in the fields.

The lowest members of this class of human beings were viewed as being only one step above the animal world.² Similarly, the animal world was classed hierarchically along a similar vertical continuum. Each animate and non-animate category was thus structured in the same way.

One remarkable expression of this scheme is observed in the precise rules governing the foods people could eat depending on their social function and position along the Chain of Being. For instance, deer, boar, pork, mutton... and fowl were reserved for noblemen, fish for the clergy and, perhaps surprisingly, beef for the peasantry, but only when it was available and at an advanced age. The same rules applied to vegetables and plants with root plants being restricted to the peasantry and thus considered unfit for the gentry, etc. (Birlouez, 2009, 28-55).

Any challenge to the social system by the lower orders of humanity was perceived to pose a serious threat to the stability of this divinely-sanctioned order. According to Véronique Theis (2020), between the 11th and 13th centuries, the rigidity of social stratification grew in tandem with the progressive consolidation and centralization of the king's power and the creation of a strong centralized system of administration. Paradoxically, the weakening of his barons, earls and dukes made it more difficult for the latter to grant privileges to their subordinates.

Social stability depended on the maintenance of the hierarchical order. This brought social order, calm and peace and was thus presented as part of God's plan. Any alteration of this scheme, it was believed, would lead to its collapse, hence, disorder, war and chaos, i.e. the predilection of Satan. As one can imagine, those at the top of the hierarchy, both temporal and spiritual, zealously defended the theological foundations that maintained their position of dominance. This vision was both religious and eminently political.

In this book we shall consider the Chain of Being from two main perspectives. The first concerns the way it determined the social order in Great Britain and the early American colonies. The second deals with the way this social hierarchy determined positive or negative sociolinguistic attitudes towards language and varieties of language in accordance with the social status of the speakers. This dimension will be discussed in greater depth in Chapters 10, 11 and 12 of Part II (Theoretical and Methodological Foundations).

We shall now turn our attention to outlining the social background of this scheme as it manifested itself in England after the Norman Conquest. In this context, we shall discuss the origins of the popular, religiously-inspired Lollard movement which arose during the 14th century in reaction to the domination

2 In Anglo-Saxon law, the *wergild*, meaning "man-price," offers an early example of the monetary worth of individual members of the various social castes.

of the ruling Anglo-Norman aristocracy and spiritual authorities. This state of affairs set the stage for the coming Protestant Reformation during the 16th century which, in turn, led to the rise of radical dissenting sects which, like the Lollards before them, directly challenged the authority of the monarchy. Foremost among these were the anti-Catholic and anti-Anglican Calvinist Puritans whose virulent anti-Catholic and anti-Anglican beliefs brought them into direct conflict with the king's royalist supporters, the so-called "Cavaliers." The result was the English Civil War (1642-1651) and the catastrophic defeat of the latter. King Charles I, a stalwart defender of the "Divine Right of Kings," was beheaded in 1649 on the order of Parliament.

Following a brief but unsuccessful eleven-year rule by this same Parliament, King Charles II was crowned in 1660, an event known as the Restoration. As he attempted to reestablish the Crown's power, privileges and authority that had been lost during the Civil War, religious and political tensions between the monarchy and the Protestant "Dissenters" continued to grow proportionately. The conflict finally ended with the Glorious Revolution of 1688 the result of which was the exiling of the last Stuart king of England, James II.³ The greatest achievement of the "Dissenters,"⁴ the term by which dissident Christians including Puritans and other Calvinists came to be known by the end of the 18th century, was the English Bill of Rights. This founding document, written in January 1689, set strict limits on the powers of the Monarchy while granting a measure of self-rule, religious freedom and basic legal rights for the common people. It is into this culture of political and religious contestation that Franklin was born.

2. Diglossia in Norman England

Let us now take a step back in history to the 11th century and briefly examine the sociohistorical consequences of a series of critical events that preceded the settlement of British North America, the first of which is the Norman Conquest of England. I believe this is crucial to understanding the sociolinguistic history of the English language of this period.

The defeat of the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings had cataclysmic consequences which resulted in the slaughter, exile and demotion of the Anglo-Saxon ruling

3 In fact, Queen Anne was Charles II's daughter and thus also a Stuart, but she was also a devout Protestant who wanted nothing to do with the Catholic faith.

4 Throughout this book, I shall use the term "Puritan" very loosely with the broader sense of "Dissenter"/"Dissenting," particularly when discussing diverse Calvinist religious denominations in Massachusetts during the latter 17th and 18th centuries. I include the Presbyterians among the latter. Some scholars also consider the Quakers, Anabaptists, etc. to be part of the dissident religious movement. All of these groups opposed the idea that the King of England should be the head of the Anglican Church/Church of England.

class. Similarly, the Old English-speaking clergy, which had cultivated a rich and vibrant liturgical and secular literary tradition in their native language, a rarity in the Middle Ages, were progressively replaced by their French-speaking Norman counterparts. Within a period of a hundred years after 1066, the Anglo-Saxon governing institutions had been systematically dismantled and replaced by Anglo-Norman French ones. The fact that the last entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* dates to the year 1154 symbolizes this dramatic shift in political power and language. It is no coincidence that linguists date the beginning of the Middle English period to this very decade.

Anglo-Norman French, a northwestern variety of *langue d'oïl*, was imposed as the high secular language of the court, of law and of administration and it remained the primary language of the Kings of England until 1399 with the death of King Richard II who is said to have been the last king for whom French was the native language (cf. below). Henceforth, English was to be reserved for those further down the Chain of Being.

Writing in 1300, Robert of Gloucester reveals the diglossic division between French and English speakers that existed in his day. Significantly, he also uses the very terms that Charles Ferguson (1959) himself employs in discussing “high” and “low” varieties of language. The difference, however, is that Gloucester extends this notion to the speakers themselves: “heimen” for the Anglo-Norman French and “lowe men” for the English peasantry and merchant class, which I see as a clear indication of the bitterness common Englishmen must have felt towards their French-speaking overlords. One hundred and forty-four years after Hastings, they still perceived them as invading foreigners and oppressors. It is interesting to note that he makes no reference to an English “mesolect,” suggesting that at this time all registers of English were still thoroughly stigmatized.

þus com, lo, Engelond in to Normandies hond. And þe Normands ne coupe speke
þo bote hor owe speche. And speke French as hii dude atom⁵ and hor children dud
also teche. So þat heimen of þis lond þat of hor blod come holdeþ alle þulke speche
þat hii of hom nome. Vor bote a man conne Frenss me telþ of him lute. Ac lowe men
holdeþ to Engliss and to hor owe speche yute. (my italics) Ich wene þer beth in al þe
world contreyes none þat ne holdeþ to hor owe speche bote Engelond one. Ac well
me wot uor to conne boþe wel it is, Vor þe more þat a mon can, þe more wurþe he
is (quoted in Algeo, 1982, 161).

In passing, keep in mind the use of *þulke speche* in this extract, as well as Gloucester’s voicing of /f/ > /v/ (in *Vor*). These features are also present in the late 19th-century passage of Somerset dialect that will be quoted in Chapter 10

5 The form *atom* offers a good example of the relaxed, orthographically variable, oral style that typified Middle English writing.

and provide a glimpse of the kind of linguistic continuity one often finds in the modern dialects of England (but far more rarely in America). Another example is “ich” for “I” which also survived in the Somerset and Dorset dialects as [ʌtʃ], often spelt “utch” (cf. Chapter 16, Volume II). All these features and many others were certainly carried over to Massachusetts and Virginia during the 17th century. Why they disappeared there and were retained in England will be addressed in Chapter 11 and Chapter 12.

During all this time, the English-speaking merchants, artisans and craftsmen continued to speak a modified form of Middle English characterized by dialect levelling (cf. Part II for more theoretical contextualization). As suggested by Robert of Gloucester in this passage, bilingualism was thought to be the best option for English speakers. The result was that a form of new hybrid variety of English, heavily influenced by Norman French, developed that was radically different from the former Old English acrolect (cf. Chapter 10).

Nevertheless, many of the profound changes which appear in the written language during the 12th and 13th centuries are, in a number of important respects, probably more apparent than real in the sense that certain changes, for instance the breakdown of the nominal case system, are probably not due solely to French adstratal effects but rather older tendencies that were already present in Old English. In other words, many of what on the surface appear to be new features are in fact reflections of formerly stigmatized oral characteristics of the Old English basilects or what Robert Burchfield calls “Vulgar Old English” (Burchfield, 1985, 13-14).⁶ The concepts of acrolect, mesolect and basilect will be fully discussed in the sociolinguistic sequel to this chapter, Chapter 10. These and other points will be expanded in more detailed at that time.

Given that French now served as the new secular acrolect, and that the Anglo-Saxon clerical class had been banished, what came to be recognized as “Middle English” was in fact a mix of formerly high and low registers of Old English which melded with an increasingly influential French adstrat, particularly in the form of loanwords and calques. It is the rising middle class of ethnic “Englishmen” who had manoeuvred their way into positions of influence whose “inter-language” contributed to the development of the new Middle English mesolect. Over time, many of the more affluent and influential members of this professional class were bilingual and served as middlemen between the ruling classes and the rest of the population.

Lexical borrowing was particularly common among the more powerful

6 An account in Bede’s 8th-century *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (see Bede’s chapter XXII), reveals the existence of Vulgar Old English. After a bloody battle in which he is wounded, a young thegn named Imma attempts to evade capture by pretending to be a local peasant. His true identity is quickly discovered on account of his noble register of speech as well as his demeanour (cf. Bede, 1955/1990 (trans. Sherley-Price), 242).

members of this English-speaking class of merchants and artisans and were used as signs of “overt prestige” to enhance their status among their compatriots. By Chaucer’s day (the second half of the 14th century), the percentage of French borrowings was already quite astounding. The use of Latinate vocabulary still remains a sign of higher formal education and prestige (cf. Chapter 10) and, as we shall see, Franklin was particularly sensitive to the power of this elevated register (cf. Chapters 2, 3, 14).

Given that the acrolect remained Anglo-Norman for centuries, English was generally viewed with contempt by the aristocratic class even if growing numbers of these among the lower echelons were increasingly bilingual. We saw that in 1300, the English language was still seen as the tongue of a conquered nation.

With the Hundred Years War against France, however, attitudes shifted. Nevertheless, the influence of the English mesolect was viewed differently from within English-speaking society where, as we have seen, French borrowings and Gallicisms were considered signs of education. Furthermore, by the 14th century, intermarriages between Englishmen and a similar class of Frenchmen became increasingly common. In such contexts, bilingualism was more commonplace in towns like London than is generally believed.

A case in point is Geoffrey Chaucer, who was born in London around 1340 (d. 1400). He was a survivor of the plague and the bloody wars against France and is a good example of the wealthy and rapidly expanding class of London merchants of his day. Fluent in French (he also spent several years in France as a prisoner of war), English and Latin, his father was a vintner (wine merchant) and also a moneyer (minter of coins) at the Tower of London. As his name implies, several generations prior to this, his family had been shoe-makers.⁷ Considered by many to be the greatest English poet and author of the Middle Ages, Chaucer was the brother-in-law of John of Gaunt, who, in turn, was the son of King Edward III, brother of Prince Edward the “Black Prince,” father of the future King Henry IV. And yet, as in his *Canterbury Tales*, despite these close ties with the highest aristocratic circles, he also shows an intimate but also affective relationship with lowest elements of English society.

As such, there can be little doubt that Chaucer’s English reflects what must have been considered to be an excellent secular linguistic model for higher-born English-speaking men and women of the day. On the other hand, for the Anglo-Norman elites, most of whom had already shifted to English and away from the Anglo-Norman French of their ancestors, there was no equivalent prestigious, aristocratic English acrolect to adopt. Since the idea of an Anglo-Norman nobleman adopting the basilectal speech of the local peasantry was

7 Chaucer name derives from Old French, *chaussier* or *chaucier* “shoe-maker” (cf. Modern French *chaussure*).

unthinkable, this left them only one choice: the English secular mesolect.

Sociolinguistically, this put the new Anglo-Norman/English aristocracy in a peculiar position compared to the situation that had existed in prior centuries. Nevertheless, internationally, Latin continued to serve as an acrolect in the liturgical domain. After the Reformation, the role of Latin continued to diminish in England.

At the bottom rung of the social ladder, the peasantry continued to speak highly diverse Middle English basilects which were thoroughly stigmatized in the eyes of all those situated above them in the Chain of Being. These Old English basilects varied considerably from region to region and, depending on the geographical setting and period, were marked by Scandinavian loanwords (in the North in particular) but also Celtic linguistic elements (mainly morphological and syntactic, in the Southwest, West and Northwest). Aside from the large amount of Scandinavian lexical borrowings, no extant textual evidence remains to inform us about the true nature of these stigmatized varieties of Vulgar Old English. To repeat, after the 11th century, an Anglo-Norman French and Latin adstrat imposed itself.

Owing to a form of social apartheid, these basilectal Middle English varieties were the least permeable to French influence owing to the limited contact between speakers of both languages. This sociolinguistic dichotomy still exists in English and is viscerally felt by Modern English-speakers who unconsciously perceive Latinate vocabulary to reflect the most elevated formal registers of Modern English. These registers are still judged by working-class speakers (particularly men) to be pretentious and, even, “effeminate.” These basilectal varieties were also the least subject to linguistic change from above but, in all probability, enjoyed a degree of “covert” prestige resulting from bonds of social solidarity among speakers of Vulgar Old English and Vulgar Middle English.

3. An English Religious, Linguistic and Social Awakening

The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) was not a war between England and France but rather a Franco-French affair pitting the French-speaking Anglo-Norman Plantagenet kings of England, with direct origins in Anjou and Maine, against the Valois dynasty of France in their bid to claim the kingship of France. This had a dual effect on the English populace. Their bitterness for their Anglo-Norman overlords was crystallized by the long wars against the French across the Channel in which the common people were expected to fight.

Flushed with victory after having destroyed the cream of French knighthood at the epic Battle of Crécy in 1346 (they later did the same at Poitiers and Azincourt), the English and Welsh longbowmen realized that, as mere commoners, they had defeated men who were kin to the same class of Anglo-Normans who ruled and

oppressed them.

Another event was to have an equally devastating effect on the populations of France and Britain, namely, the Black Plague, which broke out the same year as Crécy. The already small Anglo-Norman population, which some have estimated to have ranged between 5% and 10% of the population, was nearly halved (see also Barber, 1965, 156).

As the war against the French raged on, the seeds of a common English identity were sown among the Anglo-Norman ruling classes. This was facilitated in part because of increased intermarriage between the two populations and the increasing numbers of Anglo-Normans whose variety of predilection was the English mesolect described above. Furthermore, Anglo-Norman French was increasingly viewed by their Francien-speaking cousins in Paris to be a backwards, corrupt dialect.⁸ The wedge that was driven between the two French-speaking populations of England and France resulted in not only a political rift but also social, cultural and linguistic estrangement.

Derek Keene (2000, 93-94) aptly summarizes what we have described at the local level:

After the Norman Conquest, when the standard language of the Old English state was rejected in favour of Latin and the addition of French made England even more of a multicultural kingdom than it already was, it was recognised that the vernacular comprised many forms of speech which, along with difference in law and custom, marked strong regional cultures. Use of English spread into south Wales and Ireland, and extended further within Scotland. This resulted from warfare and the imposition of new forms of lordship, but even more from the spread of commerce and the foundation of towns. By the late 13th century English was distinctly associated with ideas of national identity while the term “tongue” itself seems sometimes to have been synonymous with “nation.” Perhaps the single most powerful and visible force in shaping this political geography was London, the capital of the state and thus of English itself.... Yet London was also the English city where the greatest number of languages and language types, of both regional and overseas origin, were spoken and intermingled.

His remark that the “tongue” had become “synonymous with nation” is interesting in the sense that the concept of “nation” or “nationhood” is often associated with “ethnicity.” The association is not new and, as far back as the Old English period, the word *þeod* meant both “the people” and the Old English “language.” This confusion between language and ethnicity is common across cultures and is an important component in the construction of identity which John Edwards (*Language, Society and Identity*, 1985) and Joshua Fishman (*The Rise and Fall of Ethnicity*, 1992), have described as “peoplehood” or “peopleness” (cf. also Giles, Taylor and Bourhis, 1973d, 177-192).

8 Some specialists of Old French tend to prefer “standard French” to Francien nowadays.

The English historian G. M. Trevelyan examined this sentiment from a sociohistorical perspective, which he believes explains the hatred and mistrust of the French-speaking ruling classes by the English labouring classes.

The habits of thought and feeling that were contracted during the Hundred Years' War with France sharply defined the new patriotic feeling in the form of racial hatred of the French. It intensified in the era of Du Guesclin by warfare against our shipping. The feeling against the French outlasted the war, and helped to put an end to that subordination of English to French culture which the Norman Conquest had established. From this time forward foreigners complained of the English common people... In the middle of the Tudor period a French visitor wrote: "The people of this nation hate the French as their old enemies, and have always called us 'France cheneve,' 'France dogue' (French knave, French dog)." (Trevelyan, 1962, 189)

3.1 Founding English-Language Religious Texts

The hostility towards the Norman-French also extended to some degree towards Latin, which many in the priesthood mastered only partially. The desire, if not the necessity, to worship in the English language was strongly felt at the popular level. The translation of the *Lay Folks Catechism* (1357) was one of the first manifestations of this need on the part of the English-speaking population (cf. Chapter 10 for the sociolinguistic impact of this translation).

John Wycliffe, a Yorkshireman, later added to the "Lay Folks Catechism" exhorting the clergy and common people alike to:

here Goddys **Service** every Sondeday with **Recerence** and **Devocioun**, and seye **devowtly** thy *Pater-Noster* ... and here Goddys Lawe taught in thy *Modyr Tonge*. For that is bettyr than to here many **Massys** (my italics).⁹ (Simmons and Nolloth, 1901, xvi)

The reference to "massys" is to the Latin language prayers which the common people could not understand. There can be no doubt that this sentiment of lassitude with both French and Latin was already widespread in England during the second half of the 14th century and probably much earlier. One of the concessions made around this time was King Edward III's passage of the Laws of Pleading in 1362 requiring that English be used in courts of law so that non-French-speaking Englishmen could understand the charges being levelled against them.

The linguistic consequence is that English was well on its way to developing not only a coherent grammatical and lexical ecclesiastical standard but also one which could serve as a more unified model for secular purposes. It all came

9 Note highlighted the Latinate borrowing in this short passage.

to a head in 1381 with several interlinking events: the translation of the Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe, combined with the fiery sermons of a rogue priest, John Ball, and the bloody Wat Tyler peasant revolt, all during the same year. The significance of this to the broader story of Franklin's life and times will be more apparent when we reach the end of this chapter. In Chapter 10, Part II, we shall return to this critical period of England language history and view it from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Although it was written decades after the event, the French chronicler, Jehan de Froissart's account of a "foolish priest" named John Ball is edifying and conserves the essential ecclesiastical message. Ball preached a remarkably bold form of liberation theology which I would qualify as a medieval "I have a dream" sermon. In so doing, he gave a voice to a sentiment of bitter frustration that had long been repressed among the common people which combined ethnic and social resentment against their French-speaking, aristocratic oppressors. Add to this Robert of Gloucester's anger about English having been relegated to the lowest levels of English society.

Ah, ye good people, the matter goeth not well to pass in England, *nor shall not do so till everything be common, and that there be no villains nor gentlemen, but that we may be all united together; and that the lords be no greater masters than we be* (my italics). What have we deserved, or why should we be kept thus in serfdom? We be all come from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve; whereby they say or shew that they be greater lords than we ben saving by that they cause us to win and labour for what they dispend? (Cheyney, 1922, 260-261)

The preaching of such radical sermons by men such as Ball and other like-minded clergymen to abolish the hierarchical order oppressing the English laity provoked what has come to be known as the Wat Tyler Revolt, a bloody peasant rebellion in which its leaders directly confronted King Richard II (the last native-French speaking king) near London, demanding hunting and fishing rights to feed their families.

According to Froissart (cf. Buchon, 1835, Vol. II, 151-152), Wat Tyler, an English veteran of the wars in France, confronted the king directly, purportedly tossing a dagger in both hands as he challenged the king. Tyler was then run through by a knight on horseback and the revolt was put down with great brutality. The leaders were summarily executed, including John Ball who was himself hanged, and drawn and quartered in the presence of King Richard II in July 1381.

Despite this turmoil, Wycliffe's English Bible translation was published during this same year, the first such English-language Bible since Aelfric's West Saxon Gospels were translated into Old English during the 10th century. Wycliffe's ecclesiastical English standard (cf. Chapter 10) was grammatically and lexically different from Chaucer's language in a number of respects. Indeed, Wycliffe's objective, of course, was to create a "high" language appropriate for

communication of God's word but, at the same time, in a register that would allow both low-born laymen (dialect-speakers) and clergymen to have access to the teachings of scripture.

The events of 1381 (Wat Tyler's Revolt and the printing of the Wycliffe Bible) were a turning point in English social but also sociolinguistic history (cf. Chapter 10). On the one hand, we see the rise of what might be considered an early manifestation of "liberation theology" where, contrary to the position of the Catholic Church, the holy scripture was used to challenge the tenants of the Great Chain of Being and, what is more, to highlight what they considered the inherent injustice and ungodliness of such a scheme. On the other hand, the intimate symbolic connection between religion, the peasantry and the English language is equally striking and marks the beginning of a movement characterized by social resistance to the power of the aristocracy and monarchy. As we shall now see, the Bible served to justify the social revindications that were inherent to this struggle. Its translation into English guaranteed that knowledge of its contents would become increasingly known by the common people.

This mix of religion, language and popular social revolt was particularly strong in the East Midlands, East Anglia and the East of England more generally, the region of England that later supplied the greatest number of dissenting Puritan settlers to Massachusetts. Franklin's family were part of this large migration and actors in this grand adventure (cf. below and Chapter 2).

3.2 Bible Translations: A Subversive Text

As pointed out above, the regional ecclesiastical standards that evolved during the 13th and 14th centuries were attempts by the clergy to unify and harmonize the regional interdialectal varieties (cf. idioms, used by the merchant class and clergy). These idioms were committed to writing throughout this period under varying forms and, at the secular level, as the administrative institutions of the royal government expanded, so did the functions of the related idioms. Various paritary (informal) and disparitary (formal) registers (cf. Chapter 10 and Glossary for definitions) developed and were recognized according to the genre and specialization of the writers' institution: law, accounting, commerce and trade, medicine and literature.

As the financial and economic networks of the merchant class continued to expand throughout the late Middle Ages into early modern times, so did their corresponding idioms. Each stage was accompanied by a host of refinements and levelling influences which contributed to a greater degree of mutual comprehension (cf. Chapters 10, 11 and 12).

As I pointed out above, the prestigious role of the ecclesiastical standard as a respected, disparitary register cannot be doubted. Diachronically, the English

of Wycliffe's Bible is more modern in many respects than Chaucer's English while, in other respects, Chaucer's vernacular is closer to today's non-standard vernacular, characterized by multiple negation, a-prefixing, "irregular" verbal morphology, use of the personal dative, perfective done, etc. (more on this in Chapter 12, Part II).

3.2.1 William Tyndale (1494-1536)

Although John Wycliffe was the first to translate the entire Bible into English, less than 150 years later, it was already considered to be outdated in terms of language, style, spelling; in short, inappropriate for the contemporary readership. Unlike Wycliffe, however, who had translated directly from the Latin Vulgate text, Tyndale strongly believed that in order to come as close as possible to Christ's message his New Testament translation should be based directly on the ancient Greek text. For the same reason, he translated the Old Testament directly from Hebrew. From this perspective, his approach was squarely in line with the principles of the greatest Renaissance thinkers (16th to the early 17th centuries).

From the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church, however, Latin was the only acceptable liturgical language and, for this reason, any translation of the Bible into a vernacular language was a violation of accepted doctrine, particularly if the translated text deviated from the theological principles of the Catholic Church in a way that challenged its institutional foundations. This was precisely how Tyndale's translations were interpreted.

Educated at Oxford like Wycliffe before him, William Tyndale was also a brilliant theologian whose views were in line with the more radical fringe of Protestant religious thinking of his day and, in many respects, he perpetuated Wycliffe's and Ball's tradition of liberation theology discussed above and which, in his own very personal way, Franklin would carry on two centuries later in British North America.

Tyndale's first translation and corresponding edition of the New Testament was completed in 1526. A number of crucial points of translation, however, put him at odds with his Catholic superiors from the outset. Firstly, and very importantly, Tyndale believed, like his fellow Renaissance scholars, that in order to understand Christ's original teachings, one had to base one's translations on the original ancient Greek text and not on the Latin Vulgate version as Wycliffe had done. This led him to translate key concepts far differently from those accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. Sir Thomas More, in particular, accused Tyndale of purposely misrepresenting terms such as "church" (Gk *ekklesia*) which he interpreted as meaning a "congregation." The word "priest" (also Greek) was translated in his first edition as "senior" and in his second edition

as “elder.” “Doing penance” was interpreted as “repentance” and “charity” was translated as “love.”

The first two interpretations of “church” and “priest” are those that were viewed as the most threatening and destabilizing to the Catholic Church which viewed his Bible as a direct menace to its authority on the grounds that Tyndale’s translation of “congregation” in the place of “Church” and “elder” in place of “priest” denied the necessity of:

- a. the Catholic “church” as an institution;
- b. officially trained “priests” to officiate in the churches and whose role was central to the interpretation of Christian doctrine (a function that the Catholic Church believed the people were not competent to do).

Although he was not alone in his convictions, Tyndale’s interpretation of these key terms overturned, in one fell swoop, more than 1,000 years of Catholic tradition. Indeed, the ecclesiastical reformers of the time, just as Protestant Christians today, followed Matthew (18:20), who cites Christ: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” In other words, a church exists when two, three or more Christians meet to pray in Jesus’ name. The congregation of believers is thus the “Church” not the Catholic institution or the physical buildings as it had been interpreted over the centuries. In this light, Christ’s claim shortly before his crucifixion that he would destroy the temple of Jerusalem and “rebuild it in three days” (i.e. the temple, the church being Christ’s holy spirit and those who had accepted it) provided enormous comfort for thousands who had been terrified by the threat of excommunication for the slightest perceived error or even for not having been administered the last rites by a priest before dying.

For these reasons, Tyndale believed that only through personal faith in Christ could one be saved, not only through good works. The Catholic rituals of confession, contrition and the last rites were also rejected in favour of a personalized relationship with God. In this respect, however, although Franklin accepted a personal connection with God through prayer, he and many dissidents (such as Cotton Mather) believed that doing good works should be central to religious expression (Chapter 2).¹⁰ This position is clearly stated in a letter written in 1738 by Franklin to his parents, in which he challenges their Presbyterian beliefs on this point. Quoting Matthew (verse 25), he argues that practical good works are what are most pleasing to God and that good works should be central to any religion (cf. Chapter 4).

¹⁰ Interestingly, this was in keeping with the teaching of James, Christ’s brother, who headed the Christian movement for twenty years after Christ’s crucifixion. St. Paul, however, emphasized faith in Christ as the pathway to salvation (Tabor 2012).

Simply put, Tyndale's English translation sparked a theological revolution in England, the goal of which was to offer the spiritual independence and well-being to the English common people. In a way reminiscent of John Ball, Tyndale declared that his objective was to "to cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more scripture than the clergy of the day." By empowering the most destitute peasant to study the Bible in his own language, that person would no longer need an intercessor to save his soul. This concept would become one of the fundamental tenants of Puritanism and Congregationalist Christianity in both England and New England.

From the perspective of the Catholic Church, of course, such opinions directly challenged the necessity for the hierarchical order on which it was based, starting with Pope on down to the lowest members of the clergy. These were not only radical departures from Catholic theological doctrine but they also posed an existential threat to the concept of the "Great Chain of Being" itself on which medieval society, both secular and temporal, had been constructed.

Tyndale published his second and third editions of the New Testament in 1534 and 1536 and, simultaneously, starting in 1530, translated a large number of Old Testament books directly from Hebrew, again with a view to capture the original meaning of scripture. Shortly after he had accomplished his task, he was finally tracked down in Holland by the religious authorities, arrested, tried, condemned and burnt at the stake for his heretical transgressions.

3.2.2 Tyndale's Successors

Perhaps to avoid the same fate as his predecessor, John Rogers completed Tyndale's work in 1537 under the pseudonym of "Thomas Matthew," hence the name of the "Matthew Bible."

The so-called "Great Bible" (1539), which was ordered by King Henry VIII, was the work of Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) who is credited with having produced the first complete English translation of the Bible. Although some portions of it were translated by him from the Latin Vulgate, his work was based almost entirely on adaptations of William Tyndale's translations. By the end of his life, however, Coverdale had abandoned many of his former Catholic beliefs and had come to adopt the theological principles defended by the early Puritans and Calvinists to which Franklin's family were also affiliated.

Importantly, Coverdale had formerly been associated with what has come to be known as the "Geneva Exiles" who compiled and published a version of the New Testament in 1557 and, three years later, the entire Bible (Old and New Testaments). This Geneva Bible is particularly pertinent to our story in that it is the one Oliver Cromwell selected as the official Bible for his Puritan (Roundhead) army and followers.

It is this Geneva Bible that the Puritans brought to the Massachusetts colony in 1620 and it remained the only Bible to which the average New Englander had access for over a century. Given that education became obligatory for children in 1642 (cf. Chapter 2) and, since grammar and lexicon (roughly 8,000 words) was the major focus of education, its linguistic impact on the early Puritan settlers as a normative and levelling device was immense. It is this Geneva Bible that was still in use in Puritan New England during Franklin's youth, although it is uncertain whether his family possessed this Bible or the 1611 King James Bible, remarks by Franklin suggest that it was the latter. As we shall see, he mastered this ecclesiastical register perfectly and was capable of switching seamlessly to the secular standard (cf. Chapter 4).

Julia Ipgrave (2017, 14), in her study of 17th-century political writing, describes this Geneva Bible as having encouraged a political reading of the scripture being characterized, for instance, by marginal notes calling for resistance by "slaves" to their tyrannical rulers (i.e. the Kings of England). A similar refrain would be heard a century later in North America in the radical sermons preached by Reverend Whitefield, who is credited with having sparked the First Great Awakening of the 1740s. Here too, Benjamin Franklin played a central role in this Awakening by printing virtually all of Whitefield's sermons in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* which, by that time, was the most widely read newspaper in America. As we shall see in Chapter 3, these ideas combined with the radical Whig political views of many colonists, particularly in Massachusetts, is at the heart of the American Revolution which, I would argue, can be viewed as a second English Civil War, or perhaps more accurately, a second Glorious Revolution.

3.2.3 *The King James Bible*

The King James Bible takes its name from King James I of England and Scotland, who gave the order to provide a new official standard translation for the Anglican Church of England. A group of forty-seven top Biblical scholars were charged with preparing this new "Authorized Bible" translation. However, the King allowed them to consult the former translations, namely, the Tyndale Bible, the Coverdale Bible, the Matthew Bible, the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible. It has been estimated that up to 30% of this Bible translation was taken word-for-word from Tyndale's work while, globally, at least 70% of the King James version was strongly influenced by the Tyndale translation. By the middle of the 18th century, the 1611 King James version was the only Bible used not only by the Anglican Church but also the other major Protestant denominations.

4. The Divine Right of Kings: Fissures in the Secular Hierarchy

Just as the Catholic Church struggled against Protestant reforms, by the reign of King Charles I of England, he too was also facing an existential threat from the same dissident sources. During the 17th century, the vision of divinely sanctioned kingship was still fiercely defended by the latter, who was also at the head of Church of England. Furthermore, church authorities could cite numerous passages in the New Testament that justified their absolute kingship and rule over the people. In this they often had the total support of the Church leadership, particularly in the Catholic and Anglican branches of western Christianity.

Romans 13:1-14 ESV

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, *whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience....* (my italics)

Hebrews 13:17 ESV

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (my italics)....

A few decades later, the notion of the "Divine Right of Kings" was taken a step further by his Charles I's Catholic nephew, King Louis XIV of France.¹¹ This vision of the absolute power of the king over his subjects was also part and parcel of the Great Chain of Being. Any resistance to this hierarchical social order was tantamount to challenging God's will.

The major religious and political force confronting Charles I came from a fiery, well-disciplined religious sect known as the Puritans with its base in East Anglia. I would argue that the revolutionary fervour and the spiritual passion which led them to challenge the authority of King Charles I has its roots in the revolutionary Lollard tradition of the 14th and 15th centuries.

In his *Albion's Seed*, David Fischer (1989, 45-46) points out that the 1381

¹¹ One extreme manifestation of this ideology was imposed during the celebration of mass when Louis XIV obliged the congregation to look at him while he alone reserved the right to look at the cross on the altar.

Peasant's Rebellion led by Wat Tyler had its origins in Surrey and Kent and, likewise, John Ball's religious "insurrection" also occurred in Kent the same year. The region experienced another peasant revolt in 1414 under the leadership of Sir John Oldham, another Lollard leader, who was burnt at the stake by his former friend and fellow soldier, King Henry V. Likewise, one can add to this list the "Clarence rising" of 1477 and Buckingham's revolt of 1483, both of which were put down with great brutality. Although the underlying causes were primarily economic, a century later, in 1549, Robert Kett led 16,000 men in a two-month rebellion against oppressive Norfolk landlords. When King Edward VI supported the latter, Kett stood against the king's forces as well. He too was executed. The point here is to demonstrate that the tradition of resistance to royal authority in matters of religion, taxes and social injustice. Likewise, two hundred years later, Edward's successors, George I and George II, would defend the Lords Proprietors of the Province of Pennsylvania, Franklin's nemeses (cf. Chapters 6-8), in a confrontation that was based on similar issues.

Fischer (1989) describes how the East of England, more than any other region, was a hotbed of the Protestant Reformation during the 16th century. For instance, when the notorious Catholic Queen Mary launched a savage purge of Protestant activists, 82% of those burned at the stake originated from these same nine counties (see John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, 1563). Franklin describes the fear of reprisal of one of his ancestors for harbouring an English Bible in his home. It is during this period that Franklin's family history begins and which he describes so vividly in his *Autobiography* (cf. Chapter 2).

Fischer (1989: 46) points out that the areas where the Lollard revolts took place were the same as those that came to form the core of the Puritan resistance against King Charles I and in which the Puritan Eastern Association was established: Essex, Hertfordshire, East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire), Huntingdon and Lincolnshire.

The religious life of this region also differed from other parts of England. It had been marked by dissent for centuries before Martin Luther. During the early fifteenth century, the movement called Lollardy found many of its followers in East Anglia. After its suppression, the underground cells of Lollards who met to study the scriptures were exceptionally numerous in eastern counties from Lincoln and Norfolk to Kent. (Fischer, 1989, 46)

It should come as no surprise then that this was also the same region that contributed the greatest number of leaders and settlers to the Massachusetts colony. Because of their direct historical ties with the Lollard revolts and with the Eastern Association, the people of Massachusetts found themselves continuing the same struggles for social justice and religious liberty which they had defended back in England. In this sense, it is significant that Franklin's maternal grandparents and mother were all Puritans from East Anglia, and that his father

and uncle were both Presbyterian Dissenters from Northamptonshire. All these people were in the vanguard of that fight for limiting the king's powers, and his authority over the Anglican Church and his control over religious expression (and tithing) more generally.

In summary, and very broadly speaking, the Lollard movement sowed the seeds which are at the heart of the two great contests of the 17th century that are central to our story: the English Civil War and later, the Glorious Revolution. As previously mentioned, the first resulted in the beheading of Charles I in 1649. The second led to the exile of the last of the Stuart dynasty, King James II (cf. footnote 3). The Protestant Dissenters were thus the cause of the downfall of two sitting English Anglican monarchs, the last of whom was, not so secretly, a Catholic. I view the American Revolution to be a direct consequence of and prolongation of these two rebellions. The English Bill of Rights (1689), a document which was designed to set strict limitations on the powers of the king and which, later served as the blueprint for the American Bill of Rights of 1791 (cf. Chapter 9). In this sense, the foundation of the United States is largely the end of a long process which can be traced back to the Magna Carta (1215).

At the age of thirty, Franklin wrote an article in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* (April 8, 1736) in which he expresses his detestation for the concept of an absolute monarchy and all it represented.

During the inglorious reigns of the Stuarts (except a part of Queen Anne's), it was a perpetual struggle between them and the people; those endeavouring to subvert, and these bravely opposing the subverters of liberty. What were the consequences? One lost his life on the scaffold, another was banished. The memory of all of them stinks in the nostrils of every true lover of his country; and their history stains with indelible blots the English annals.

Back in England, however, there were many who still clung to the older vision of an inalterable universal order in which mankind was expected to faithfully obey the traditional social structure. Such views were defended by the Tories in particular, who believed that the King should be the ultimate authority in all matters and that those further down the social chain should not dare to challenge his decisions.

Writing in 1733-1734, Alexander Pope, a Catholic, makes specific reference to the "Chain of Being" in his "An Essay on Man" in which he contends that any challenge to this God-determined scheme would have disastrous metaphysical consequences that would lead to a cataclysmic collapse of the entire human social order:

VIII. See, through this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and bursting into birth.
Above, how high, progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below?

*Vast chain of being! which from God began,
 Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
 Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
 No glass can reach; from Infinite to thee,
 From thee to nothing. On superior powers
 Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
 Or in the full creation leave a void,
 Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroyed:
 From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
 Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.
 And, if each system in gradation roll
 Alike essential to the amazing whole,
 The least confusion but in one, not all
 That system only, but the whole must fall.
 Let earth unbalanced from her orbit fly,
 Planets and suns run lawless through the sky;
 Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurled,
 Being on being wrecked, and world on world;
 Heaven's whole foundations to their centre nod,
 And nature tremble to the throne of God.
 All this dread order break—for whom? for thee?
 Vile worm!—Oh, madness! pride! impiety! (Pope, 1732, in Henry Morely (ed.),
 1891)*

Pope's poem thus reveals the persistence of the older medieval views which had been so staunchly defended by the Stuarts during the preceding century. We shall see that the Hanoverian dynasty attempted to whittle away some of the principles outlined in the English Bill of Rights in which men like Franklin so fervently believed. Franklin's rejection of this older vision of a divinely sanctioned hierarchical world order is one of the defining battles of his entire life. His RMS was but one minor attempt to alter that social order by empowering the people by giving them access to literacy.

Charles I's nephew, King Louis XIV of France, was a particularly detested figure among English Whigs, foremost among whom was Franklin's well-loved uncle (a Dissenter and radical Whig) who composed a long poem celebrating his defeat by the Duke of Marlborough at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704. In Chapters 25 and 29 and in Appendices 1 and 2, we shall see that Franklin transcribed two stanzas of Joseph Addison's poem "The Campaign" about the defeat of Louis XIV in his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*. In Chapter 29, I demonstrate that Franklin's friend and fellow Whig, Sir William Jones, also transcribed the same verse of this poem in his "A Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters" (1786, 33). I take this to mean that, not only did this English victory serve as a code expressing solidarity among Whigs and their aversion to absolute monarchy, but also as additional proof that Sir William Jones had read Franklin's RMS (cf. Chapter 29).

Very broadly, at the core of the contest between Franklin and the leaders in the House of Lords and the King's Privy Council (1758-1775) over the rights of the British North American colonies was a essentially a confrontation between these two ideologies to which is appended, at a deeper level, a fierce class conflict. On the one hand, the latter held firmly to the idea that the king's authority and decisions should never be challenged by those of an inferior social station while the Franklin's Whig allies stubbornly defended their interpretation of the English Bill of Rights (see Chapters 8 and 9) and the necessity to defend the fruits of the Glorious Revolution.

It is my strong belief that it is the political ramifications of these opposing views that ultimately led to the American Revolution and continued to split British society throughout 19th and 20th century. The "class wars" are simply another manifestation of a much older struggle. In many ways, these divisions are still at the heart of British politics today.

The degree to which the American Revolution may, or may not, have had a sociolinguistic impact in forging a new American-based linguistic standard of English will be touched on throughout this book (cf. Chapters 29 and 30 in particular).

5. The Massachusetts Settlement

Considering the close historical bonds between Puritan New England and the South and East of England, an overview of the English settlement in particular of the Massachusetts Bay Colony would be in order. By the time of Franklin's birth in Boston in January 1706, the English had been established there for eighty-six years. His maternal grandparents left Norwich, Norfolk and arrived in Massachusetts in 1635. His father, uncle and older siblings arrived in 1683. Franklin's parents and many of his neighbours were thus among the first and second generations of settlers and, during his youth, we can be certain that he was intimately familiar with not only their religious and political views, but also the varieties of English in which they expressed their views (cf. Part III, Chapters 16-24).

Of direct pertinence to our discussion is the fact that the demographics of early Massachusetts determined the form of English that was established there. The "Genesis of American English" will be the subject of Part III of this book. Based on the theoretical foundations explained in Part II, I shall argue that New England English was perhaps most greatly indebted to the varieties of English, both standard and vernacular, that were spoken in the East, Southeast and Southwest of England during the late 16th and 17th centuries.

The second part of this hypothesis is that, by the early 18th century, these varieties had already fused into a recognizable New England koine by the time

of Franklin's birth. Franklin and his siblings born in Massachusetts, but not his English father or uncle, would have spoken this new variety. How different it was from the varieties spoken in English will be the topic of discussion of Part III. The evidence presented here is also intended to serve as an introduction is devoted to identifying the New England "feature pool," i.e. the mix of dialectal characteristics that were brought to Massachusetts from England by this original "founder generation" (see Chapters 11 and 12).

The first Puritan settlers founded Plymouth (named after the port of departure) in 1620 but, just as in Virginia, their numbers remained relatively low until the first waves of settlers began arriving between 1629-1641. As religious tensions heightened during the prelude to the English Civil War, many more fled to Massachusetts to escape persecution by Charles I. Many others, however, embarked for Massachusetts with the objective of establishing a theocracy where the only laws governing the colony would be those of scripture. We have seen above that Franklin's maternal grandparents were among the first of these arrivals from Norfolk (cf. Chapter 2) and his father, Josiah, and his uncle Benjamin, also emigrated to England for religious reasons. By all accounts, however, the two brothers were not rabidly anti-Anglican and they did not cut ties with their family in England, who remained faithful to the Church of England.

In the climate of political turmoil which reigned in England throughout the first half of the 17th century, 20,000 Puritans fled their homes. However, unlike the Virginia Colony, the Massachusetts Colony was radically different in its social makeup. John Algeo describes the Puritans as follows:

They were largely educated and middle class, with a notable absence of lower-class members, and they came not singly but in families. Although they came from all over England, East Anglia was their principal place of origin. The typical Puritan leader was well-educated, a graduate of Cambridge with strong religious and social commitment. The typical Puritan follower was a craftsman – literate, urban, disciplined and pious. The Massachusetts colony was remarkably homogeneous, especially in its leadership. (Algeo, 2001, 8)

As in the first phase of the colonization of Virginia, the intellectual and ruling classes came largely from the eastern and southeastern counties of England and one of the major features Massachusetts English still shares with the English of the Virginia blue bloods as well as the English of southeastern England is the absence of rhoticity but, as we shall see, this feature was initially stigmatized and Franklin's English and that of most educated 18th-century New Englanders was rhotic.

One of the first accomplishments of the education-hungry Puritans upon

arriving in Massachusetts was to establish centres of learning.¹² By 1635, the first of these, Harvard College, had been created for the purpose of training clergymen. In Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, we learn that his father, Josiah, had wanted his son to study there but simply did not have the funds.

The first law obliging children of all social backgrounds to attend school for the purposes of reading the Bible was passed in 1642. We have seen that the Geneva Bible, the Bible officially sanctioned by Oliver Cromwell during the Civil War, served as a linguistic model for Puritans of all ranks. The influence this Bible had on standardizing the grammar of New England English was immense. By 1700, it is estimated that the population of New England (which included New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia at the time) stood around 80,000. As I argue in Chapter 14, Franklin himself confirms that a regional form of New England English was identifiable by 1739, and he describes some of the non-standard features identifying each colony.

The first US census was published in 1790, the year of Franklin's death. It reveals that the English population of the United States was still 83% overall. New England remained overwhelmingly English, with Massachusetts at 95%, Rhode Island, 96%, Connecticut, 96.2%, Vermont, 95.4%, New Hampshire, 94.1% and Maine, 93.1%.

If my theoretical arguments outlined in Part II (cf. particularly Chapters 10, 11, 12) are well-founded, this demographic evidence tells a lot about the nature of the early New England koine which, above anything else, must be understood the result from dialect mixture but within a process which I continue to term "koinization" (cf. Chapter 12). We shall see that the settlers bound for Massachusetts often belonged to the middle and lower middle classes and were often selected following interviews to determine their moral standing and capabilities. Once again, for the reasons expressed above, the English spoken in their "New Jerusalem" was generally based on eastern and southern dialects with considerable input from the Southwest during the second phase of settlement. We shall see in Part II that the higher registers of their speech were already partially levelled as a result of their knowledge of the new ecclesiastical standard even before leaving England. The topic of demographics and the impact on the creation of North American koines will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 12.

12 In Chapter 12, we shall see how, following the Restoration of 1660, Dissenters were banned from holding important posts in English universities. Brilliant orthoepists such as John Wallis and John Wilkins, both founders of the Royal Society, were Presbyterians (like Franklin's family), and were fired from their posts.

2. Franklin's Family History and his Formative Years (1706-1723)

Introduction

Benjamin Franklin's life experience and world view fits squarely within the social, theological and sociolinguistic framework described in Chapter 1. One of the major influences that changed Franklin's life and strained his relationship with his parents and the people in his community is his espousal of Deism at the age of fifteen. Furthermore, at the dawn of the 18th century, he also embraced many of the new ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers. Nevertheless, in my view, many of his interpretations of these were, in fact, secular reworkings of concepts inspired by the visions of the adventurous progressive Protestant Reformers discussed in Chapter 1.

One of the objectives of Chapters 1 through 5 is to highlight the way Franklin viewed education and, most notably, how he considered the mastery of written and spoken standard English, in the process of being defined at the time, to be a means of social and economic advancement. This is a topic that has been neglected in many biographies dedicated to his life and accomplishments.

The discussions in Part I are largely based on my interpretations of Franklin's *Autobiography* (or memoirs, as he once called them) and on his personal correspondence. It should be pointed out from the beginning that his *Autobiography* was written during four separate phases of his life when he was already advanced in age. More importantly, they were written after relations between the American colonies and Great Britain had soured to a point of no return. The first installment begins in 1771 while he was still in England and at a time when his relationship with his son William was still close. Sadly, this was to change. He began Part II while he was in Paris (Passy) serving as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States in 1784. Parts III and IV were completed in Philadelphia, a year after the drafting of the US Constitution, in 1788 and in 1789, the year preceding his death. The accounts he gives, as fascinating as they are, never go beyond 1757 and are viewed through the prism of time, many decades after the events he recounts.

One of the reasons for focusing on his *Autobiography* and relevant correspondence as primary sources is to divulge Franklin's nature, his personal philosophy and his profound belief in the importance of a well-educated citizenry and the usefulness of this to the commonwealth. Related to this is his conviction that a solid command of the English language, both written and oral, is essential to the proper functioning of a democratic society. Related to this was his belief that this was the only way for the common people to achieve the same intellectual level as the aristocratic class. This is a theme that emerges time after time in his writings. We shall also see how his personal interpretation of the nature and role of "Providence" (Chapter 4) is at the heart of all the philanthropic projects he undertook during his lifetime (cf. *The Art of Virtue*, 1726, and the *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*, (1728). Linked to this of course is his long life as a public servant and, in most respects, his goals in this capacity are in perfect harmony with his self-defined moral principles (Part I, Chapters 6–9).

In his "Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, then and now," Stephen C. Arch (2008) observes that "Franklin's *Autobiography* is recognized as one of the most significant texts written by any of the men and women association with the nation's founding." He points out that no less than eight full-length biographies were published between 2000 and the publication of his article in 2008. Of Walter Isaacson's bestseller, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (2003), he writes, "is in its early chapters merely a retelling of Franklin's *Autobiography*: like all of Franklin's biographers, Isaacson finds it difficult to escape the pull of Franklin's plot" (Arch, 2008, 169). For my part, I have made no effort to do otherwise but, unlike nearly all other biographies, my use of his *Autobiography* concentrates on the issues that concern us most: his views on the English language, education, society, culture, religion and the sociohistorical and geopolitical context in which he evolved. Part I traces the manner in which his dissident English background, his self-proclaimed devotion to "doing good" as well as his steadfast adherence to the principles of the English Bill of Rights eventually drove him to join the struggle to found a nation based on the principles of (radical) Whiggism. His genuine love and admiration for the motherland made this political schism all the more painful.

1. Franklin's Family History (1555-1706)¹

It is not by accident that the first topic broached in Benjamin Franklin in his *Autobiography*² is his family history, for which he provides numerous

1 Franklin, 1909, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/148/148-h/148-h.htm>. Henceforth, all references to this book are indicated by BF.

2 Following other authors, I have entitled it *Autobiography* throughout this book, although he himself did not give it a specific name, referring to it once as his "memoir."

instructive details about his modest social origins, in particular, his father's Northamptonshire roots. In this section we see how, even after the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution, the Great Chain of Being, the notion of the Divine Right of Kings as well as the role of religion in justifying the vertical hierarchy that structured English society, were still largely accepted and fixed in the minds of the people.

We have seen that Franklin began writing the first part of his *Autobiography* in 1771 when he was sixty-five years of age and he dedicates the accounts about his life to his son William with the hope that it would serve as a guideline for his own life.³ We learn from Franklin's testimony that, while he was touring England with William in 1758, they visited the village of Ecton in Northamptonshire (ninety miles northwest of London) where his father, Josiah, and all his paternal ancestors had lived since at least 1555, the date of the earliest parish registers. Franklin's grandfather, Thomas, was born there in 1598 and was a blacksmith, a trade that had been passed down from father to son for generations. Only five years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence (which he proofread alongside Jefferson), we have the distinct impression from his accounts that Franklin, even as an agent representing the grievances of the colonies in London, still very much saw himself as an ethnic Englishman, as well as an American. For him and most of his compatriots in the colonies, there was no contradiction between the two identities. Until the Revolution they were, first and foremost, British subjects.

Franklin informs us that his grandfather Thomas had four sons: Thomas Jr., John, Benjamin and Josiah, the latter being the youngest son and Benjamin Franklin's father. Following the tradition of the time, the eldest son, Thomas Jr., served an apprenticeship with his father as a blacksmith. The other three were forced to learn other trades. He describes all of them all as "ingenious, and encouraged in learning (as all my brothers were)" showing that the value placed on education was part of an older family tradition. Franklin uses the word "ingenious" nineteen times in his *Autobiography* to describe men he admired most. It is a virtue which could be glossed by "innate creative intelligence" and a quality which he clearly believed he had inherited (cf. Bunker, 2019, *Young Benjamin Franklin: The Birth of Ingenuity*).

Significantly, the family's focus on education was of primary importance to the Franklins and he explains that his grandfather's four sons all received instruction from a certain Esquire Palmer, whom he describes as a "*principal*

3 This was at a time before their falling out several years later on account of William's decision to side with the Tory Loyalists against his father. The decade from 1765 to 1775 was a particularly trying and critical time when Franklin faced rigid opposition from the Parliament and the King who had blocked any attempts by the Americans to obtain even the slightest measure of self-rule (regarding arbitrary taxation) or representation in Parliament.

gentleman in that parish” and a “*scrivener as well as a chief mover of all public-spirited undertakings* (my italics) for the county or town of Northampton and his own village” (BF, p. 7). The passage in italics provides us with a first clue regarding the values Benjamin Franklin cherished most and it is evident from this passage that he sees in Palmer’s qualities, a mirror-image of himself. Franklin highlights the fact that Palmer died on January 6, 1702, “just four years to the day before I was born:”

The account we received of his life and character from some old people at Ecton, I remember, struck you [i.e., his son William] as something extraordinary, from its similarity to what you knew of mine “Had he died on the same day”, you said, “one might have supposed a transmigration.” (BF, pp. 7-8)

We also learn that his grandfather Thomas practiced his trade until he was too old to work, at which time he went to live with his son John, who was a “dyer of woolens” at Banbury, Oxfordshire. It is with John that Benjamin Franklin’s father, Josiah, served an apprenticeship to learn this trade. “There my grandfather died and lies buried. We saw his gravestone in 1758” (BF, p. 7).

Thomas’s third son, Benjamin, after whom Benjamin Franklin was named, was a silk dyer who learned his trade in London. Uncle Benjamin too is described as “ingenious” and something of a poet who left two “quarto volumes of poetry” (BF, p. 8), a few pieces of which have survived and will be analyzed in Chapter 17. One of these is a nostalgic piece on his home village of Ecton. Franklin also describes him as “very much the politician,” a reflection of his profound Whig beliefs.

The fact that all the sons had served apprenticeships suggests that grandfather Thomas was a relatively wealthy man for the time. Wealth meant status and social recognition but, despite their obvious intellectual qualities, the Franklin family remained “obscure,” a term which betrays Benjamin Franklin’s deep sense of social inferiority, a stigma he struggled to overcome throughout his entire life, with only partial success in my view. Seen from this perspective, one can better understand Franklin’s weakness for flattery. Even after the age of sixty-five, he relishes giving accounts of the numerous occasions he received praise and recognition from socially prominent individuals.

At the very beginning of the English Reformation (1534-1603), Franklin’s ancestors were Anglicans and he explains how they clung fiercely to their faith during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary (1553-1558). It is she who condemned over 280 Protestants to be burnt at the stake, the vast majority of them from Essex, Sussex, Norfolk, Kent, Suffolk and the London area, as discussed at the end of Chapter 1, hence her nickname, “Bloody Mary.” On account of their “zeal against popery,” Franklin stresses how his family lived in constant fear of being denounced. Once again, we see the Franklin family was already well-anchored in the anti-Catholic Protestant camp in the mid-16th century, a period when

many Englishmen were still Catholic.

Franklin also informs us that the family possessed an English-language Bible⁴ and he tells an anecdote about how his great-great-grandfather had concealed this Bible under the seat of a joint-stool.⁵ In order to read it, he would turn the stool over, place it upside down with the seat resting on his lap and, if someone arrived at the door unannounced, he had only to place the stool back down on the floor thus concealing his Bible.

This account is significant in that it demonstrates that, even though they were humble artisans, the Franklin family was already literate as early as the mid-16th century and perhaps even before that. Franklin himself states that he could not remember a time when he could not read. Franklin's great love of reading is thus anchored in this historical and religious context demonstrating the crucial importance of literacy, knowledge of scripture and learning to his entire family. We shall see that the whole purpose of Franklin's spelling reform was to make it easier for people to learn to read English and thus have access to a better education.

We also discover from this anecdote that the Franklin family had long been ready to risk their lives in defence of their religious beliefs. For this reason, they were prepared to resist what they considered to be abusive monarchs who would impose their religious views on the people.

The Franklin family remained Anglican until after the Restoration (1660) and throughout most of the reign of Charles II (1660-1685). Theologians have described this period as an intense personal quest for spiritual truth and, in this climate, the two younger brothers, Benjamin and Josiah, decided to break with the Church of England and join the Dissenters, and more specifically, the Presbyterian movement, thus splitting the family religiously. The Dissenters' main criticism of the Church of England was that its doctrine and ritual were too closely tied to Catholicism. Furthermore, just as they had rejected the religious authority of the Pope and his supposed "infallibility," they also rejected the King of England's authority as the head of the Church of England to whom they were obligated to tithe. The significance of this becomes obvious during the First Great Awakening in the colonies in 1739 when both Puritans, Congregationalists and Presbyterians and even Anglicans began turning away from the traditional denominations in favour of the more radical Methodist and Baptist faiths. As the editor of the leading newspaper in British colonies, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Franklin also played a crucial role in this religious movement for years by

4 This may have been the Matthew Bible authorized by King Henry VII in 1539 and also known as the *Great Bible*. It was largely based on John Tyndale's earlier translation from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

5 The seat top of a typical joint-stool during the Tudor period was 19" x 21"; Matthew Bible = 12"-16" x 8"-11".

printing all Reverend Whitehead's revolutionary sermons and pamphlets.

Franklin specifically describes his father and uncle as Calvinist "Presbyterians" and, in order to "enjoy their mode of religion with freedom," Benjamin and Josiah, along with the latter's wife and three children, set sail for Massachusetts in 1682 where a large community of Puritans and co-religionists had fled in 1620. Josiah and his wife had four more children in Massachusetts, the last two being born in Boston. It was while giving birth to her last child that Josiah's first wife died.

With seven mouths to feed, it was not long before Josiah met and married Abiah Folger, a family acquaintance who also attended the Old South Church in Boston. Josiah fathered a further ten children with Abiah. Their last child was born on January 6, 1706, and named Benjamin after his uncle. The registrar indicates his birth as follows: "Benjamin Frankling, born Janry 6, 1706." We shall come back to the significance of these "misspellings" in Part III.

Here many like-minded Englishmen sharing similar religious views had settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their visceral opposition to the Church of England and the Crown's "establishment" of Anglicanism as the official religion of England was strongly supported by radical Whigs back in England who believed in the axiom that moral corruption and decay leads to the rise of autocratic kings. Left unchecked, tyrannical kings abusively restrict the powers of the legislative body (Parliament, in the case of Britain) and thus suppress the political and religious rights of the people.

Although the radical Whigs and, later, the Commonwealthmen of the early 18th century were a relatively weak political and religious force in England itself, their ideas were espoused with great fervour in the North American colonies, particularly in the North, throughout the 18th century. After the First Great Awakening (1730s-1740s), which resulted in a mass exodus from the traditional Congregationalist and Anglican churches, this movement gained favour in Virginia and the southern colonies where royalist leanings had been far more pronounced. (Cf. Franklin's promotion of Reverend Whitehead's sermons and Waldman's analysis of its political consequence in Chapters 4 and 5.)

Franklin describes his Uncle Benjamin as a very pious man who regularly attended sermons by the best preachers in Boston, but he was also "much of a politician" (BE, p. 8). Franklin indicates that he had published a collection of pamphlets relating to public affairs in England between the years 1641 to 1717 which Benjamin discovered in a London bookshop many years later. As mentioned earlier, he was also an amateur poet. This demonstrates that, in addition to their intimate awareness of the religious controversies of their time, there was clearly a powerful political and ideological dimension to the family discussions which must have given young Benjamin an equally radical turn of thinking and which conditioned him for his future career as a printer, writer, editor and statesman. He remarks that it is his father's books on "polemic

divinity” that gave him a taste for “disputing” (debating), an activity in which he came to excel. Once again, the long English tradition of radical Christian theological positions combined with the radical “progressive” political positions went hand-in-hand and thrived in the North American colonies.

Franklin gives far less information about his mother, Abiah, and her family background than he does his maternal grandfather, Peter Folger (1617-1690), was a Puritan minister and a fervent opponent of Charles II for having persecuted Dissenters. Folger was a Norfolk man and part of the first generation of Puritan settlers in New England. He was a well-respected contemporary of the famous Reverend Cotton Mather who had spoken highly of Folger in his church history, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, describing him as “a godly, learned Englishman” (BF, p. 9), another indication that the notion of “Americanness” had not yet taken root (cf. Chapter 6).

Although Franklin does not mention it, Folger, in addition to his ministerial duties and his profession as a teacher among the Wampanoag people, also served as a translator. With other missionaries among the Wampanoag people, he also participated in translating the Bible into their language, a branch of the Algonquin family. The translation has survived in a contemporary document entitled *Up Biblum* (Fisher, 2018). As such, it is one of the earliest documents written in an Amerindian language, a veritable treasure for linguists and all those interested in Native American culture.

Folger was also a writer and Franklin describes his grandfather's literary style as being “written with a good deal of decent plainness and manly freedom” (BF, p. 11), ideals Benjamin Franklin espoused throughout his life. These values echo Francis Bacon's call for simplicity in writing, an ideal that was advocated by many dissidents (Görlach, 1991). The implication here is that he avoided flowery language and Latinate vocabulary, a model that Noah Webster (1789) also believed should be followed by Americans. Franklin recounts that he had read some of the verse his grandfather had composed in 1675 in which he had argued in favour of “‘liberty of conscience’ for the Baptists, Quakers and other sectaries that had been under persecution,” a position which was later, but more indirectly, defended in John Locke's influential 1689 essay entitled “A Letter Concerning Toleration.”⁶

In an interesting twist, Peter Folger ascribes the wars between the English and the Wampanoag Amerindians of Massachusetts as God's punishment for the King Charles II's “heinous” religious oppression and he exhorts the king to repeal his repressive laws against the Dissenters.⁷

⁶ Locke was also one of the authors of the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina (1669-1670).

⁷ Charles II and his brother and successor, James II, were cousins of Louis XIV of France, a fanatical defender of the Divine Right of Kings. In exchange for Louis XIV's military support, the latter secretly converted to Catholicism and, during the Glorious Revolution, was forced to

It is of course King Charles II's religious policies, and the Catholic leanings of his brother James II, who succeeded him, that led to the latter's destitution during the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In Chapter 6 through 9, we shall see the extent to which Franklin considered the principles outlined in the English Bill of Rights (January, 1689) to be at the heart of a new, more democratic and representative system of government. During the time he served as a representative and agent for the colonies from 1745-1776, it served as the legal and moral justification for his resistance against what the Dissenters viewed as the King's abusive policies in the colonies. Indeed, the principles outlined in the English Bill of Rights were to inspire the writing of the American Constitution (1787) and Bill of Rights (1792) a century later.

Franklin would later continue this family resistance to royal authority by personally confronting King George II and his son George III (Chapters 6-9).

Franklin provides us with virtually no information about his female ancestors in his *Autobiography*. For instance, he makes no mention of his maternal grandmother, Mary Morrell, who arrived in Watertown in 1635 as an indentured servant and who made the crossing on the same ship as Peter Folger, her future husband. Originally from the Puritan stronghold of Norfolk, as an indentured servant, she belonged to the lowest social category of immigrant and was essentially a slave, the difference being that the length of servitude, depending on the contract, was in principle limited to a predetermined number of years. Obviously attracted to her during the sea journey to Massachusetts, Folger purchased her for a cost of 20£ and later married her in 1644. They had nine children in all, one of whom was Abiah, Franklin's mother.⁸

Whether consciously or not, Franklin paints the picture of a family that places far more stock in ethical and moral integrity and that rejects any form of submission to earthly authority including the Crown. This rebellious attitude, so prevalent among New Englanders, was not lost on the monarchy and Anglican leadership back in England and the growing rift between England and America should be understood to be a consequence of this latent but visceral social and religious antagonism rather than any nationalistic (and anachronistic) "American" motivations or forces as the term might be understood today.

The seeds of the American Revolution, in which Franklin was to play such an important role, had been sown in England centuries before. As I explained in Chapter 1, in my view, this conflict could be described as a "Second English Civil War" or perhaps more aptly, the culmination of the "Glorious Revolution." A simple glance at America's Bill of Rights (1792) makes this obvious.

To conclude this subsection, Franklin's short family history is highly significant

flee to Versailles.

8 One of their daughter's, Bethshua Folger Pope, would participate as a witness during the Salem witch trials of 1692. Her testimony resulted in the hanging of at least one woman.

in the way he presents the values and qualities of his English ancestors. We learn that both sides of the family were all literate and had enormous respect for education. They were all highly industrious, intelligent and steadfast in defending their religious convictions. This was the legacy he sought to convey.

Furthermore, despite his insistence on their humble origins, Franklin remarks on several occasions that his ancestors were well-respected, contributing members of their respective communities, whether in England or in America. As Dissenters, his father and maternal grandfather were all hostile to the King's oppressive religious laws as well as to all forms of totalitarian behaviour regarding his rule over the colonies. This alone sets the stage for the conflicts in which Franklin and like-minded colonists would soon find themselves embroiled.

2. Franklin's Family and Childhood (1706-1723)

Franklin recalls seeing his thirteen brothers and sisters sitting around his parents' dinner table, including his uncle Benjamin who, being ill and jobless, lived with the family for a number of years. I should mention here that seven of his older siblings were born in Northamptonshire from Josiah's first wife, Anne Childs, who had died in childbirth bearing the last of these. As mentioned previously, he had ten more with Abiah, who were all born in Boston, Benjamin being his last son. He was followed by two sisters. In the family household, Franklin must thus have heard a mix of Northamptonshire accents alongside those of his Boston-born brothers and sisters. The degree to which this entailed dialect mixing or code-switching is impossible to tell, but it provides some insight into the dialectal situation in many families at the time (cf. Chapters 11 and 12).

Josiah, who had been trained as a dyer in Oxfordshire, discovered upon his arrival in Massachusetts that the market for bright-coloured woollen clothing among the Puritans was virtually non-existent, plain dress being considered a virtue. As a former silk-dyer, Josiah's brother Benjamin was even more hard put to find work than his brother and, as was just said, remained unemployed for several years. Josiah finally adopted the profession of a tallow-chandler (candle-maker) and eked out a meagre living for his family. Nevertheless, Benjamin Franklin proudly points out on his parent's epitaph that neither his father nor mother (nor any of his English ancestors), had ever been employed by or in the service of any man. They were thus part of the proud mesolectal-speaking class of artisans, craftsmen and merchants discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Earning one's living independently was the objective of many socially ambitious people of his time and, for Franklin, this was a source of considerable pride.

He describes his father Josiah in some detail stating that he was well-built, extremely strong and "ingenious," traits that he suggests he also inherited. He drew well and had a good voice and also played the violin. At the end of his

workday, he enjoyed entertaining his family by singing and playing psalm tunes for them. Franklin also describes him as a “mechanical genius” (BF, p. 12), a gift that Franklin clearly shared.

His father’s greatest ability, however, lay in “his solid judgment in prudential matters, both private and publick affairs.” For this reason, Franklin stresses that his father was contacted by the “leading people” in Boston who sought his advice to resolve problematic affairs of the town or the church and he proudly states that his father was often selected to be an arbitrator between opposing factions in various disputes. Once again, Franklin clearly sees himself as having inherited his father’s good judgement as well as his family’s industriousness, integrity and native intelligence.

We shall see in Chapters 6 through 9 that, like his father, Benjamin Franklin also played the role of arbitrator during his thirty-year crusade to defend the fundamental rights of colonies. The respect he expressed in his *Autobiography* for his father’s wisdom clearly encouraged him to emulate him, for instance, his father’s habit of inviting “sensible friends and neighbors” to discuss “some ingenious or useful topic for discourse.” In so doing, his father turned the attention of his children to what was “good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life” (BF, p. 12). In an age when Protestant Christianity was at the heart of every dimension of social and intellectual life, the philosophical effects of his religious upbringing were certainly immense. Franklin writes that the discussions at the dinner table were often so fascinating to him that he often paid no attention to what he was eating for supper.

He was convinced that it was this religious education which refined his thinking and, in his later writings, he demonstrates his subtle knowledge of both the Old and New Testaments on multiple occasions. His mastery and knowledge of the ecclesiastical standard of the Bible was total and, thanks to his ability to cite relevant biblical passages and link them in a pertinent way with current events, he frequently found that he was able to manipulate religious-minded men and sway their opinions, for instance, when defending political positions or promoting altruistic projects.

Franklin’s affection and respect for his parents and their moral code is best summed up in the epitaph he wrote for them. At a more profound level, it also reveals the values he held dear regarding the role of common men and women:

Josiah Franklin, And Abiah his wife, lie here interred. They lived lovingly together in wedlock fifty-five years. Without an estate, or any gainful employment, By constant labor and industry, with God’s blessing, They maintained a large family comfortably, and brought up thirteen children and seven grandchildren reputably. From this instance, reader, Be encouraged to diligence in thy calling, And distrust not Providence. He was a pious and prudent man; She, a discreet and virtuous woman. Their youngest son, In filial regard to their memory, Places this stone. J.F. born 1655, died 1744, Ætat 89. A.F. born 1667, died 1752, - 85. (BF, p. 13)

Furthermore, this is the lengthiest single description of his mother one encounters in his *Autobiography* and this account alone seems to sum up the way he viewed the average married woman's social role (including that of his future wife, Deborah Read). During his day and age she loved her family, worked hard, raised her children and grandchildren reputably, trusted in Providence, and, was unobtrusive and morally righteous. Elsewhere, he adds that his mother had an excellent constitution and "she suckled all her ten children," dying at eighty-five years of age (BF, p. 13).

In this discussion I would like to introduce the very important testimony of Dr. de Cabanis, a young physician who cared for Franklin during his stay in Paris while he was negotiating a treaty of alliance between France and the nascent United States (1776-1785). As we shall see in Chapter 5, Franklin confided many personal sentiments to de Cabanis which, to some degree, are absent in his English-language writings and correspondence. In his *Oeuvres posthumes* published in 1825, de Cabanis writes of the important role that Franklin's mother played during his early life. One senses she may have been a little overbearing at times, particularly in matters of religion (cf. Franklin's letter to her and his father in Chapter 4).

Franklin lacked for nothing during his childhood; his soul was not aggrieved by want of anything⁹ and the first lessons that he learned were those of work, thrift, common sense, virtue, and the happiness that a life of work produces. It appears that his mother was a person full of good common sense. She directed her children's minds toward ideas that could be practically applied to the daily affairs of life, and she inspired in her children those habits that could bring them greater advantages and pleasure in life. Franklin often told us an anecdote of a visit to the local fair. He had been given some money by a relative to spend as he pleased. The first thing that caught his eye upon entering the market hall was a whistle. The merchant was making sounds that sounded absolutely delightful to him. He longed for it so much, and he expressed his desire with such energy that the merchant took every penny he had in his pocket...

His mother then told him: "My dear boy, when you buy a whistle, you should always know beforehand how much it costs. Here is a little advice, whenever you want something, ask yourself first 'How much is the whistle worth?'" Franklin added that he never forgot this lesson and that, ever since that time, he had probably never felt a strong desire for anything without repeating that little proverb to himself.

When his son petitioned the court of St. James for the governorship of one of the thirteen states,¹⁰ a position that unfortunately bound him to the Royalist party, Franklin said to him, "Think of what the whistle might cost you one day! Why

9 In the company of French aristocrats, my impression is that Franklin may have glossed over the poverty of his family and the deprivations he most certainly endured as a child.

10 His son William was appointed Royal Governor of New Jersey by the king (1763 to 1776). Franklin saw this as a betrayal and it is this that caused the rift between them.

don't you become a carpenter or a wheelwright, since the fortune I leave you isn't enough?" (De Cabanis, 1825, 222-223)

His mother frequently remarked on his passion for this kind of pastime, but her advice was somewhat like other sermons and she consoled herself by thinking that he was growing stronger every day and thus acquiring the instrument without which the most distinguished talents and the happiest circumstances are so often wasted: robust health. (De Cabanis, 1825, 222-224)¹¹

It was under the watchful eye of such a good mother that Franklin spent his childhood. ... But his restlessness, growing weary of the narrow circle in which he found himself confined, soon made his father's house unbearable... (Ibid., 232).

At another level, his attitudes towards the women of learning that he met in London and Paris were often far more respectful and progressive in the sense that he expressed genuine admiration for their intellect and wit. His frequent relationships with "naughty women" (cf. below), regardless of their social status, suggest a more mundane vision he had of womankind.

2.1 Franklin as a Nascent Scholar (1714)

In his article entitled "Phonetics and Politics: Franklin's Alphabet as a Political Design," Looby (1984, 3) argues that Franklin's early education had a powerful impact on the way he viewed language and its role in a Puritan social and religious pact.

Franklin's fascination with the alphabet began when, like other children in Boston in the 18th century, he learned his letters from the New England Primer. In that

11 *Franklin ne manqua de rien dans son enfance; son âme ne fut point flétrie par le besoin; et les premiers exemples qui s'offrirent à ses regards furent ceux du travail, de l'économie, du bon sens, de la vertu, et du bonheur que produit une vie laborieuse. Il paraît que sa mère était une personne pleine de raison. Elle dirigeait l'esprit de ses enfants vers les idées applicables aux choses journalières de la vie, et leur inspirait les habitudes qui peuvent y faire recueillir plus d'avantages et de douceur. Franklin; nous a raconté souvent qu'un jour de foire, ayant reçu d'une de ses parentes quelque argent qu'on lui permit d'employer à son gré, le premier objet qui frappa son attention en entrant sous la halle où se tenait la foire, fut un sifflet dont le marchand tirait des sons qui lui parurent ravissants: il en eut grande envie, et il le témoigna d'une manière si forte, qu'on exigea de lui tout ce qu'il avait dans sa poche.....La mère reprend : « Mon ami, quand on achète un sifflet, il faut toujours savoir d'avance ce qu'il coûte. Je te conseille, toutes les fois que tu auras envie de quelque chose, de te dire d'abord : Combien vaut le sifflet? » Franklin ajoutait que cette leçon n'était jamais sortie de sa mémoire, et que depuis il n'avait peut-être pas eu de violent désir de quoi que ce fût, sans se répéter le petit proverbe. Lorsque son fils demanda à la cour de Saint-James le gouvernement de l'un des treize états, grâce par laquelle il se trouva si malheureusement lié au parti royaliste, Franklin lui dit : « Songe à ce que peut te coûter un jour le sifflet! Que ne te fais-tu plutôt menuisier ou charron, puisque la fortune que je te laisse ne te suffit pas ? (De Cabanis, 1825, 222-223)... Sa mère lui faisait des observations fréquentes sur sa passion pour ce genre de plaisir: mais ses avis avaient un peu le sort des autres sermons; et elle s'en consolait, en songeant qu'il devenait de jour en jour plus vigoureux, et qu'il se procurait ainsi l'instrument sans lequel les talents les plus distingués et les circonstances, les plus heureuses sont si souvent perdus, une forte santé... C'est sous la surveillance d'une si bonne mère, que Franklin passa son enfance. ... Mais son activité, qui se lassait du cercle étroit dans lequel il se trouvait resserré, lui rendit bientôt la maison paternelle insupportable... (Ibid., 232).*

speller, the basic tenets of the Puritan social order – a whole array of commands and interdictions, beliefs and values – were made to emerge, as it were, from the letters of the alphabet. The analogy between the order of the alphabetical characters and the norms of society was implicit.

Indeed, in his *Autobiography* Franklin states that he does not recall a time when he was unable to read and, on account of his precocious intellect, by the time he was eight, his father and his uncle Benjamin were convinced he would make a good scholar and clergyman. At a time when the notions of science and religion were essentially indissociable and, as we shall see in the coming chapters, Franklin's interest in electricity and other fields of natural philosophy, or "science" as we now call it, grew out of his desire to understand the mechanics of God's natural creation.

Making a pun on the fact that he had had 10 children from Abiah, Josiah decided to offer his youngest son Benjamin "as the tithe of his sons" (BF, p. 10) to serve the Presbyterian Church. It was for this purpose that Franklin entered grammar school in 1714 at the age of eight. In less than a year, he became the best pupil of his class and, thanks to his quickness of mind, was placed into the second level. By the end of the year, he was moved to the third level.

Unfortunately, given the number of mouths he had to feed, Josiah could not afford his son's tuition and was forced to place Benjamin in a less expensive school to learn writing and arithmetic. Although he learned to write very well in a short time, he failed in arithmetic, a discipline in which he remained very weak until, many years later, he claims to have mastered the subject. As we have seen, humility was not one of Franklin's primary virtues (cf. Franklin's *Art of Virtue*, Chapter 4).

In 1716, at the age of ten, Benjamin Franklin was brought home again on account of Josiah's enduring financial woes. At this time, he assisted his father as a tallow-chandler's apprentice (candle-maker). This was a difficult, filthy and literally stinking job (candles were made from melted animal fat), but it was better paid than that of a dyer. Franklin states that he could not imagine himself following this line of work and secretly desired to go to sea, a job his father strictly forbade him to do on account of the death of his eldest son, Josiah Jr., whose ship had been lost several years before. Despite his father's objections, Benjamin claims that he learned "to manage boats well" and also became an excellent swimmer. This was fairly common in Massachusetts but a rare skill in Britain and he would later attract great attention and admiration from English gentlemen during his first stay to London in 1724 when, for a short while, he considered starting a swimming school.

Sensing Benjamin's "hankering for the sea" (BF, p. 14) and fearing he might run off like his eldest son had done, Josiah finally acknowledged that his son was not suited to succeed him as a tallow-chandler. Yet he persisted in his hope that he might become interested in a manual trade and introduced him to numerous

independent workmen (bricklayers, carpenters, etc.). Josiah even tried to have him sign on as an apprentice to his nephew Samuel (his brother Benjamin's son) who had learnt cutlery in London.

At length, Josiah finally gave up his efforts. In 1718, fully aware of his son's keen love of reading, books and study, he finally decided to place him as an apprentice to his son, James. The latter, after having served an apprenticeship in London as a printer the year before, had recently returned to Boston. Two years later, he would soon found his own newspaper, the *New England Courant*. At the age of twelve, the indentures were signed declaring that Benjamin would serve his brother until he turned twenty-one (i.e., in 1727).

2.2 Franklin, the Printer's Apprentice: Mastering the English Language

Shortly after he had begun his apprenticeship in 1718, Franklin met another "bookish lad" in the town by the name of John Collins. The two were particularly fond of arguing, matching their wits and "confuting each other." Reading between the lines, it is clear that Franklin was more than a little swell-headed and he himself acknowledges that his tendency to contradict others in casual conversation was a very "nasty and obnoxious habit" in which he indulged with great pleasure. He admits that "I had caught it by reading my father's books of dispute about religion" adding that "persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and men of all sorts that have been bred at Edinborough" (BF, p. 16).

It is in this context that we have the first clues about Franklin's views on language. As I have already mentioned, he was intimately familiar with the ecclesiastical standard and spoke a form of the Boston mesolect. He was also intimately familiar with the various English non-standard, stigmatized dialects that had brought over from England.

One of the early debates he mentions dealt with "the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study." Collins believed that it was improper for women to have an education and that they were "naturally unequal to it." Franklin admits that he was in general agreement but, "perhaps a little for dispute's sake," adopted the opposite point of view (ibid.). Franklin was quick to note that Collins had a much richer vocabulary and won the debate on account of his fluency rather than the soundness of his arguments. It is through allusions such as these that we gather that, little by little, Franklin was already sensitive to the importance and utility of mastering a cultivated register of formal spoken and written English.

Frustrated at not being able to "confute" his friend's counterarguments, Franklin and Collins continued their jousting in three of four letters (which have

since been lost). Franklin's father finally intervened as an arbitrator:

Without entering into the discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the manner of my writing; observed that, "though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which I ow'd to the printing-house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remark, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to endeavor at improvement. (BF, p. 16)

Here we see proof that Josiah, despite his poor status, was a highly educated man, capable of judging whether a text was grammatically acceptable and stylistically elegant. We also observe that, rather than being hurt and discouraged by his father's comments, Franklin was convinced of the truth of his observations and immediately committed himself to improving his style, enriching his vocabulary and focusing more attentively on the structure and eloquence of his arguments (see the effects of his discovery of the *Spectator*, 2.3 below).

Although non-standard English was commonly used in labour-intensive professions (cf. Chapters 11 and 12) and Franklin certainly heard it daily in the streets of Boston, there is no indication that he ever deigned to speak the vernacular. Despite their relative poverty, this suggests that he and his family members may have viewed themselves intellectually superior to the common people of Boston and its environs (cf. Chapter 14 for Franklin's prescriptive views on language).

By the end of 1718, Benjamin claims he had become proficient in his tasks in his brother's print shop and, by his own account, was a very efficient printer's assistant. The immediate benefit was that he became acquainted with the other booksellers' apprentices from whom he was now able to borrow books, all of which he promptly read and returned. Such was his thirst for knowledge that he would often spend the greatest part of the night reading and studying. Sometime thereafter, he met an "ingenious tradesman" by the name of Matthew Adams who had noted young Benjamin's fascination with books and reading. Adams was kind enough to lend him books from his personal library.

By this time, at thirteen years of age (1719), he tried his hand at composing ballads, the first being called the "Lighthouse Tragedy" concerning the recent drowning of Captain Worthilake and his two daughters. He describes this ballad, which has now been lost, as "wretched stuff." Nevertheless, it sold wonderfully and encouraged him to write another ballad on the capture of "Teach" or Blackbeard the pirate. Both were published in his brother's newspaper, the *New England Courant*. Franklin came to see that being a printer's apprentice offered many benefits which he would later exploit to great effect and he soon realized that it provided him with a platform to convey his ideas and beliefs to the local community. The success of his two ballads "flattered my vanity" but clearly annoyed his father who ridiculed his poems stating that "verse-makers

were generally beggars” (BF, p. 15). This stern reprimand turned him away from poetry *as a profession* and oriented him towards prose writing which he viewed as a “principal means to my advancement.”

Nevertheless, he never fully abandoned poetry and composed well over 3,000 lines in his *Poor Richard’s Almanack* (1733-1758). We shall see in Chapter 15, and in discussions throughout Part III (Chapters 16-24), the great value of Franklin’s rhymes in assessing his early Boston English pronunciation. This source, which has never been exploited, fundamentally alters our understanding of his pronunciation which has, until now, rested on the analysis of his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*. The “Taking of Teach the Pirate” is particularly revealing given that it discloses the nature of his Boston accent and provides some fascinating insights into the way he spoke as a young boy (e.g. *manfully* ~ *die*, *rove* ~ *love*, etc.). Some of these features creep unintentionally into his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*. We shall see that these are not imperfect rhymes or even eye-rhymes and, as hard as it is to accept at this point in our study, that they fit into a logical phonological system that had taken shape in Boston during the course of the 17th century (cf. Chapters 10, 11 and 12).

These references demonstrate that, even at this early age, all the ingredients for his later spelling reform were already in place: his love of language, his competence in spelling, and his early abilities as a printer’s apprentice were crucial elements in this process. Indeed, in this capacity, it was his task to learn typesetting, the insertion of lead characters into the forms. Given Franklin’s inquisitive mind and nature, there can be little doubt that, very early on, he must have been sensitive to the numerous inconsistencies in our antiquated spelling system. Looby (1984, 5) concurs, making this perceptive observation, “Franklin’s world view was so profoundly influenced by his experience as a printer that the topic demands separate treatment: it is not too much to say that he saw the world through the grid of a case of type.” As Franklin points out in the version of the spelling reform proposal he sent to Polly Stevenson in 1768, the gulf between the written language and the actual pronunciation of English at that time was enormous and presented tremendous obstacles for those learning to read.

As a typesetter, the use of digraphs such as <gh>, <th>, <sh>, <ea>, <ee>, etc. must have struck him as inefficient on account of the fact they reflected multiple possible pronunciations, which can be explained by the fact that the system was based on 15th-century English pronunciation. That this outdated system should be replaced by one in which each character represented a clear phonological realization must have appeared to be obvious to him. We shall return to this topic in Part II, Chapter 13. We shall see that Franklin was not the first to come to this conclusion.

Franklin certainly understood that simplifying the orthographic system would result in a considerable saving of time, effort and money. Furthermore,

the financial profits for the inventor of such a new system would also have been enormous given that the printer would then have a monopoly over the reprinting of all the books that had been published in the older traditional system of orthography (cf. Polly Stevenson's critical remarks about his RMS on this point in Chapter 25). It is therefore hard to imagine that these practical questions had not entered his mind during the very early stages of his career.

2.3 Improving his Written Style

It is during this time that he discovered the "third volume" of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Spectator* (perhaps N°3, Thursday, March 1, 1711?)¹² which he purchased with his own money. He was so thoroughly impressed by what he considered to be the excellence of the writing that he "read it over and over and was much delighted with it" (BF, p. 16). He goes on to state that from this point on he viewed their prose to be a model which he sought to imitate. No doubt the subtle humour, puns and jibes were particularly pleasing to him.

Susan Fitzmaurice's enlightening article entitled, "The *Spectator* and the Politics of Social Networking," explains that "The significance of the *Spectator* as an index of popular taste for the century is unchallenged, and its impact on the many spheres of eighteenth-century experience is undoubted."

In answer to the question "What does this model of English consist of?" she responds, "The codification of language the grammars of the second half of the century (i.e. the eighteenth) results in a clear sense of what low(-class) or *impolite* language is: archaic, colloquial and ungrammatical. Modern Standard English is up-to-date, formal and correct. Unlike traditional regional dialects, it is free from lexical and grammatical archaism" (Fitzmaurice, 2000, 198).

In short, the vernacular paritary koine (cf. Chapter 12 and the Glossary for definitions and discussion) that, Franklin heard daily in the streets of Boston, was precisely the kind of language he (and his family) rejected. Standard English was synonymous in their minds with social advancement. Importantly, both the ecclesiastical and secular versions of it implied linguistic "order" which would, in turn, serve to convey clarity of thought and expression. Orderliness in all things was part of God's plan, while disorder was the consequence of Satan's work.

Just as the most correct grammar was based on the speech of cultured luminaries in London, years later, when he conceived his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*, there is little doubt in my mind that he intended his phonological model to be based on cultivated London English speech. In keeping with what Fitzmaurice wrote above, Franklin's New England variety of English was without doubt significantly more "archaic" and hence less "up-to-date" than the

12 See <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/12030/pg12030-images.html#section3>

proto-RP London accent that was to be championed by the likes of Sheridan, Nares and Walker (cf. Part II, see Franklin's linguistic insecurity in Chapter 14 and Chapter 25).

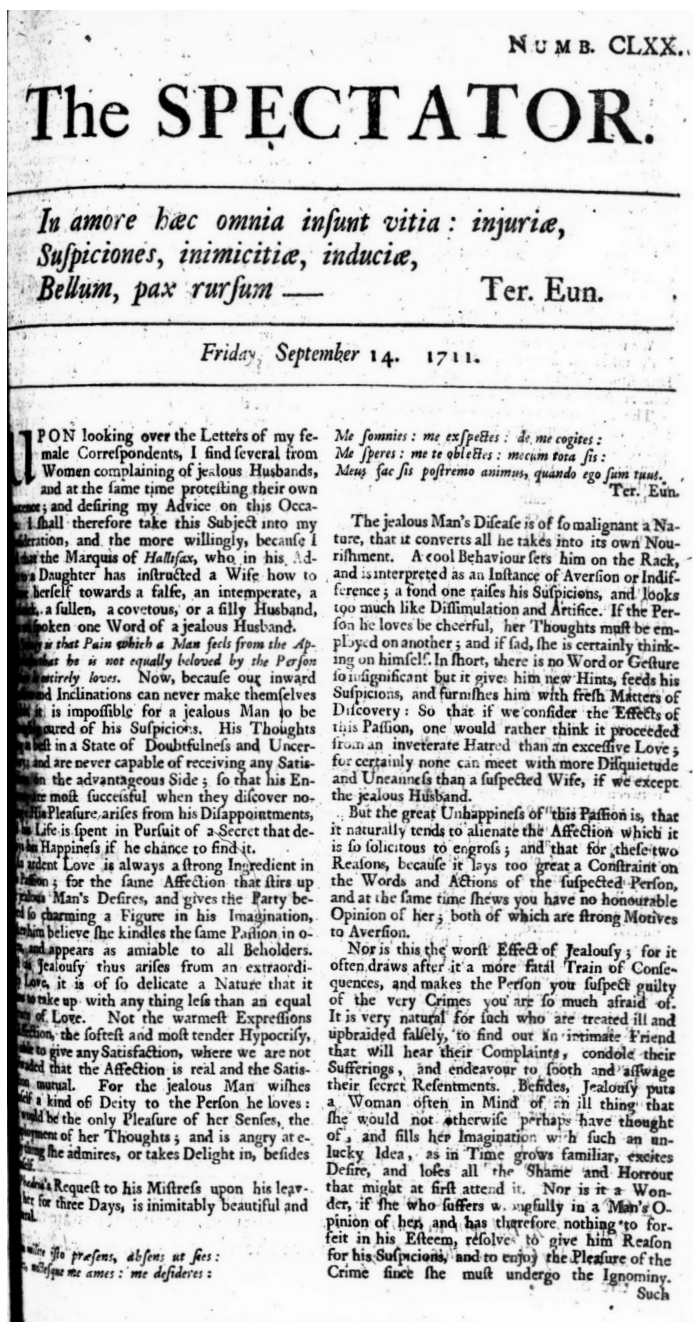


Fig. 2.1 The *Spectator* (1711, vol. III, n°170), public domain, https://archive.org/details/sim-spectator-1711_1711-09-14_1-8_170

The meticulous manner in which Franklin set about trying to improve his written style is pertinent to our topic because it provides us with further insight into his working methods and the way he later went about devising his spelling reform. He claimed that, in his spare time, he would select an interesting passage from a *Spectator* article or essay and make a short summary of each sentence in his own words, and then he would lay it aside for a few days.

My time for these exercises and for reading was at night, after work or before it began in the morning, or on Sundays, when I contrived to be in the printing-house alone, evading as much as I could the common attendance on public worship which my father used to exact on me when I was under his care, and which indeed I still thought a duty, though I could not, as it seemed to me, afford time to practise it. (BF, p. 16)

After a lapse of time, he would then attempt to rewrite the article in his own words. The final stage consisted in comparing his version to that of the original, the objective being to correct his errors and improve his own style. His acceptance of his own shortcomings is both candid and forthright.

But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints¹³ into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and compleat¹⁴ the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts.

By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious. (BF, pp. 16-17)

This early obsession to improve his “method” and style of English reflects his determination to master the disparitary (i.e. formal, prescriptive language, cf. Chapter 10 for a complete definition) register in vogue among the intellectual elites in London which he states on several occasions to be the centre of culture, science and political power of the British Empire, an Empire in which he firmly believed America was a central part. He remained an unyielding believer in his

13 I.e. his glosses of the sentences.

14 We shall see in Part III that his spelling of “complete” betrays his [ɛ:] pronunciation of such words (cf. Chapter 17).

vision of America's role in the Empire until the political intransigence of the monarchy and its Tory supporters pushed the Americans to secede (cf. Chapter 9).

Franklin's ambition to become a writer not only reveals his deep-seated love for the English language but it also divulges another ambition: improving his humble social status through the mastery of the written word.

A testimony to his lifelong admiration for Addison can be seen in the fact that Franklin transcribes two stanzas of Joseph Addison's poem, "The Campaign" (1704), which he transcribed into his new reformed orthography (1779). The poem was composed in commemoration of General John Churchill, the 1st Duke of Marlborough, and his defeat of Louis XIV's army at the Battle of Blenheim. The fact that Addison was a fellow Whig is also significant given that the purpose of his poem was not only to celebrate the military defeat of the "Sun King" but also to rejoice in the humiliation of a tyrant and the foremost advocate of the Divine Right of Kings. His arrogance and gaudy flaunting of his riches and power, combined with his Roman Catholic faith, combined all the characteristics radical Whigs detested. A demonstration of Franklin's contempt for this king is to be seen in this stanza he composed in 1735 (*Poor Richard's Almanack*) entitled "On Louis the XIV of France."

Louis ('tis true, I own to you)
Paid Learned Men for Writing,
And valiant Men for Fighting;
Himself could neither write nor fight,
Nor make his People happy;
Yet Fools will prate, and call him *Great*;
Shame on their Noddles sappy.

We shall see in Chapter 29 that Franklin's friend, Sir William Jones, went on to design his own phonetic alphabet which he presented in his famous treatise entitled "A Dissertation on the orthography of Asiatick words in Roman Letters" (1786). In his "Dissertation," he transcribed the same stanza of Addison's poem as Franklin had. As previously stated, Jones did indeed read Franklin's RMS but, thanks to Franklin's arguments outlined in it, it may have encouraged Jones to conceive his own system which Kate Burridge (2013) considers to have been a forerunner of the IPA. While this may be true, the filiation is in fact far more complicated (cf. Chapter 13 and Chapter 29; and Synopsis and General Conclusions).

Franklin rarely makes any overt comments about accent in his writings – grammar and vocabulary seem more important to him – but when he does, it is clear that he considered that the pronunciation of London's privileged classes should be the model for all subjects of the British Empire. Franklin certainly was not alone in this, and it was the role of the orthoepists to define a formal, "polite"

standard of pronunciation. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that, at the time he devised his orthographic spelling reform in 1768, Franklin was hoping to be appointed to a ministerial post within the imperial government and was set on establishing himself permanently in London. Even after the bloody and bitter war with England, towards the end of his life he described London as “the city I love, having lived many years in it very happily” (BE, p. 128).

2.4 Franklin, a Lover of Books

At this point, after reading a book by Thomas Tryon (1634-1703) advocating a vegetable diet, Franklin decided this would be a way to save money for the purchase of books:

I made myself acquainted with Tryon's manner of preparing some of his dishes, such as boiling potatoes or rice, making hasty pudding, and a few others, and then proposed to my brother, that if he would give me, weekly, half the money he paid for my board, I would board myself. (BE, p. 17)

In this way, Franklin was able to save half the money he was paid by his brother, thus permitting him to buy a further eighteen books, the titles of which he does not mention. Moreover, since he no longer ate lunch or dinner with his brother, he was able to remain in the printing-house and study after his meals. He found that by drinking only water and eating a slice of bread and a handful of raisins or a tart, he was more alert, clear-headed and quicker to understand and solve problems when they came up.

Shortly thereafter, Franklin decided to tackle arithmetic which he had twice failed while in grammar school. He took “Cocker's book of Arithmetick” and studied it thoroughly and, contrary to his prior failures, was pleased to discover that he now mastered the subject quite easily. He then went on to study *Seller's and Shermy's books on Navigation* whereby he came to be acquainted with geometry. He also mentions that he read Locke's *On Human Understanding* and also the *Art of Thinking* by the “Messieurs du Port Royal” (*La logique, ou l'art de penser*), by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, two leading figures of the Jansenist movement based in the Cistercian abbey of Port Royal near Paris. Blaise Pascal is also thought to have contributed to this book on logic.

Still determined to improve his command of English, he claims to have studied an English grammar book that, he believes, was written by James Greenwood.

While I was intent on improving my language, I met with an English grammar (I think it was Greenwood's), at the end of which there were two little sketches of the arts of rhetoric and logic, the latter finishing with a specimen of a dispute in the Socratic method. (BE, p. 18)

If so, it was probably James Greenwood's first 1711 edition entitled *An Essay*

towards a practical English Grammar: Describing the Genius and Nature of the English Tongue, London (2nd edit., 1722; 3rd edit., 1729... 5th edit., 1753). Nevertheless, I found no reference to such “sketches” in it nor any reference to the Socratic method. However, Greenwood does cite the English orthoepists John Wallis and John Wilkins in this book and it may be here that Franklin first acquired knowledge of their work in this book. Greenwood (1711, 233) cites “Bishop Wilkins” and Mr. Ray, for instance, who criticized English orthography for being too “deficient in some respects and superfluous in others.” The full significance of this will be examined in Chapter 13. We shall see that it is virtually sure that aspects of their work, starting with John Hart and Sir Thomas Smith before them, probably served as a model for Franklin’s RMS.

Fitzmaurice (2001, 198) explains that grammars such as this one “offered lower middle-class readers a way of distancing themselves from those they considered their immediate social inferiors by giving them the means of ascertaining the level of gentility attained.” Here, once again, we return to the Great Chain of Being where sociolinguistic prestige mirrors the speaker’s position along a vertical social continuum. “Lower middle-class” is probably the social category with which Franklin’s family would have classified themselves and his motivations appear to be precisely those described here. His fascination with the *Spectator* is another indication of his desire to distinguish himself from the vernacular-speaking underclasses.

Fascinated by what he felt was a far more subtle and constructive approach to “disputing,”¹⁵ Franklin acquired and studied Xenophon’s *Memorable Things of Socrates* which included many specimens of that method. He writes, “I was charm’d with it, adopted it, dropt my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter” (BF, p. 18).¹⁶

The more he read, the more we understand the degree to which he had become a free-thinker (an atheist or Deist), taking delight in challenging many of the widely-held views and beliefs of his contemporaries. For instance, after reading the positions of the Earl of Shaftesbury and Anthony Collins advocating Deism he became “a real doubter in many points of our religious doctrine” (i.e., Presbyterianism; more on this below) adopting positions which a few decades before his birth could have led him to the stake (BF, p. 18). All of this provides us with further insight into Franklin’s mind and character, a quick-minded and rebellious adolescent who was growing evermore haughty and self-confident as a result of his superior intellect and debating skills:

15 The verb to “dispute” is a borrowing from French (meaning “to argue over,” “discuss” first attested in Old French, 12th c.).

16 A book under the same title, *The Memorable Things of Socrates*, was translated by Edward Bysshe and was published in London in 1712. This was probably Franklin’s source.

I found this method safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I used it; therefore I took delight in it, practis'd it continually, and grew very artful and expert in drawing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee, entangling them in difficulties out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining victories that neither myself nor my cause always deserved. (BF, p. 19)

He adds that over the years he gradually learnt to soften his approach by trying to appear more diffident and by putting on an air of false modesty by avoiding the use of words such as “certainly” or “undoubtedly” in favour of expressions such as “I should think,” “I imagine,” “If I am not mistaken”... This method, he claims, was of “great advantage to me” when attempting to make deals, to promote his political opinions or when persuading people to engage in certain altruistic projects, of which he had many. In the end, he concludes:

As the chief ends of conversation are to *inform* or to be *informed*, to *please* or to *persuade*, I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their *power of doing good* (my italics) by a positive, assuming manner; that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat every one of those purposes for which speech was given to us, to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure. (BF, p. 19)

“The power of doing good” was central to his religious philosophy and, ultimately, was behind his idea to launch his RMS (cf. Chapter 4).

2.5 Franklin, a Budding Writer (1720-1721)

By 1720, Benjamin was fourteen years of age and, in this year (or perhaps in early 1721) his brother founded a newspaper named the *New England Courant*. At this time, there was only one other newspaper in Boston (the *Boston News-Letter*) and nay-sayers advised the two brothers that one newspaper would be “enough for America” (BF, p. 20). Indeed, the thirst for information and learning in the colonies was such that, thanks in part to Franklin’s training and setting up his printers in different colonies, there were no less than twenty-five in all by 1771. While his brother Thomas composed the types and printed the sheets, Benjamin went through the streets delivering the papers to the customers.

Thomas had “some ingenious men among his friends” who contributed pieces to the paper and, after a time, it gained in popularity. Hearing their conversations, Franklin developed a desire to try his hand as a prose writer but, because of his young age, was convinced his brother would refuse. It was at this time that he secretly contrived a plan to propose an anonymous piece entitled “Silence Dogood” (a collection of fourteen letters) for the *Courant*. One night, he slid the first of these under the door of his brother’s shop. When his brother discovered it the next morning, he passed the piece on to his friends when they called in. They all read and gave their thoughts about it. Franklin,

was eavesdropping nearby and

...had the exquisite pleasure of finding it met with their approbation, and that, in their different guesses at the author, none were named but men of some character among us for their learning and *ingenuity* (my italics)... Encourag'd, however, by this, I wrote and convey'd in the same way to the press several more papers which were equally approv'd. (BF, p. 20)

At length, James discovered young Franklin's trick and, far from acknowledging his brother's talents, he took the ruse as a sign of disrespect and was embarrassed that he and his influential friends had been taken in by a mere fourteen-year-old boy. There was also an element of sibling rivalry in James' reaction since his brother-apprentice was attracting too much positive attention.

From this point onwards their relationship began to sour. James must have already been annoyed by Franklin's acute perspicacity but also, and perhaps especially, by Benjamin's growing swell-headedness and self-conceit.

In an effort to curb his young brother's insolence, James attempted to apply stricter rules of discipline. At this point, Benjamin began to complain that he was being treated more as a servant and less as a brother. Indeed, at the age of sixty-five, Benjamin bitterly states that he was frequently beaten and, in footnote 3 of his *Autobiography*, he adds a political twist to the relationship with his brother alluding metaphorically to his later conflicts with the English monarchy: "I fancy his harsh and tyrannical treatment of me might be a means of impressing me with that aversion to arbitrary power that has stuck to me through my entire life"! (BF, p. 21) (for his fight against tyranny, cf. Chapters 6 through 9).

James Franklin appears to have shared his family's propensity for speaking his mind on political matters and, as a newspaper editor, James wrote an article expressing a political position which greatly offended the Massachusetts House of Representatives. At the time, British authorities reserved the right to imprison journalists who had made unfavourable remarks about them or their policies. This is precisely what happened to James, who was then censured and imprisoned for a month. During this period, Benjamin took charge of his brother's business and, under his management of the paper, he wrote an article in which he took his brother's defence and profited from the occasion to take a few swipes at the ruling establishment himself. From this time onward Franklin was increasingly viewed in an "unfavorable light, as a young genius that had a turn for libeling and satyr" (BF, p. 21).

Considering his young age, Franklin had already gained an extraordinary amount of practical experience as a printer and, in a short time, now mastered composing, type-setting and printing, not to mention the valuable knowledge he acquired in business management practices during his brother's absence. Furthermore, as we have seen, by the age of sixteen, he had already won some acclaim as a ballad-composer and a prose writer. Nevertheless, during this brief

period of respite during James' imprisonment, the relationship between the two brothers progressively worsened after his release and Franklin again complained of the unfairness of his "indentures" and expressed bitter resentment for "the blows his passion too often urged him to bestow upon me." Franklin allows for the fact that his arrogance and vanity had a role in inciting his brother's brutality when he adds, "Though he was otherwise not an ill-natur'd man: perhaps I was too *saucy*¹⁷ and provoking" (BF, p. 22).

Sensing Franklin might seek work elsewhere, James had made certain that no one else in Boston would hire him. With tensions at an unbearable level, Franklin decided to flee from Boston in 1723 at the age of seventeen. By doing so, he was violating his indentures, a crime severely punishable by imprisonment, flogging or both.

In an interesting admission, Franklin confesses that he had made himself unwelcome in his hometown on account of his unorthodox political and religious views as well as for his sheer arrogance. He had made himself:

a little obnoxious to the governing party, and, from the arbitrary proceedings of the Assembly in my brother's case, it was likely I might, if I stay'd, soon bring myself into scrapes; and farther, that my indiscrete disputations about religion began to make me pointed at with horror by good people as an infidel or atheist. (BF, p. 22)

Benjamin then sold a number of his books to raise some money and, with his friend John Collins, contacted the captain of a New York sloop that was moored in Boston Harbor. Because they were under age, he and Collins concocted a story that Benjamin had "got a naughty girl with child, whose friends would compel me to marry her" (BF, p. 23)... Little did he know that, in 1729, a mere six years later, he did make a "naughty girl" pregnant, the mother of his future son William. In this way, he made his escape by ship to New York without any foreknowledge of the place and without any recommendations or guarantees to find work.

17 We shall see in Part III (Chapter 19) that his informal pronunciation of "saucy" was probably [ˈsæsi], as it is today in American English, meaning, "arrogant," "impudent." It is now spelt "sassy." The verb to "sass" also exists in American English meaning to "speak in an impudent manner."

3. Printer, Writer and Businessman: Franklin's Rise to Prominence (1723-1750s)

Introduction

Chapter 3 begins with Franklin's escape from Boston and focuses on his early life in Philadelphia, starting with his early experiences in Philadelphia and his first job as a journeyman printer. From the beginning of his stay there, thanks to his native intelligence, his talent as a worker and quick wit, he makes powerful acquaintances and friends. This brings him to London where he spends eighteen months honing his skills as a printer and socializing with the luminaries and free thinkers in places like Batson's Coffee-house (Cornhill). It is also a period of instability, both in his personal as well as in his professional life.

Upon his return to Philadelphia, we see him engage in serious thought about questions of morality and virtue (cf. Chapter 4) which result from what appears to be a sincere desire to make sense and bring order to his life. From this time onward he strives for financial independence, even if it means ruining his employer.

What is striking about this early period is Franklin's meteoric rise to prominence, first as a successful businessman and writer but also as one of the most influential political personalities in the British North American colonies.

1. Franklin, Runaway Indentured Servant (1723)

Once in New York, Franklin made the acquaintance of the only printer in town, Mr. William Bradford. Although he had no work for the young Franklin, he suggested that he should go to Philadelphia where his son ran a printing shop and whose principal assistant, Aquila Rose, had died shortly before. During the tiresome seaborne journey to New York, which was marred by a squall and poor weather, he saved the life of a drunken Dutchman who had fallen overboard.

He arrived in Philadelphia drenched, exhausted and nearly penniless

remaining in constant fear that he might be arrested as a runaway servant (often treated in the same manner as runaway slaves (cf. Rose, 1999).

I was dirty from my journey; my pockets were stuff'd out with shirts and stockings, and I knew no soul nor where to look for lodging. I was fatigued with travelling, rowing, and want of rest, I was very hungry; and my whole stock of cash consisted of a Dutch dollar, and about a shilling in copper. (BF, p. 26)¹

Franklin mentions that the first day of his arrival in Philadelphia, he passed in front of a house where a young woman was standing. On account of his wretched appearance, he writes that she smiled at him in an amused manner. The young woman was Miss Deborah Read, who was to become his future common-law wife.

At this time, Philadelphia had a very large Quaker population. As we have seen, the majority were from the Northwest Midlands and, though Franklin does not discuss this point in any detail, one can assume he heard modified varieties of accents from this region of England which must have sounded quite different from his own. It is in one of their meeting houses that Benjamin found refuge upon arriving there where he fell fast asleep (cf. Chapter 12 for some examples of Quaker speech cited by Franklin).

The next morning after his arrival, and after tidying himself up as well as he could, he went straight to Andrew Bradford's printing shop in search of work. Bradford told him that he had nothing available for him at that moment, but he kindly offered him breakfast and accompanied him to the shop of a second printer named Mr. Samuel Keimer. There he introduced Franklin to him and Keimer agreed to take him on. The two men agreed that, on occasion, he would also do odd jobs for Bradford as well.

What strikes the reader is that, even after all the decades that had passed before he started writing his *Autobiography* in 1771, Franklin shows absolutely no gratitude to either man for having offered him food and work at a time when he was, by his own admission, totally destitute. Franklin's self-conceit and his penchant for denigrating those he felt were intellectually inferior to himself shines through in the following passage.

These two printers I found poorly qualified for their business. Bradford had not been bred to it, and was very illiterate; and Keimer, tho' something of a scholar, was a mere compositor, knowing nothing of presswork. He had been one of the French prophets, and could act their enthusiastic agitations. At this time he did not profess any particular religion, but something of all on occasion; was very ignorant of the world, and had, as I afterward found, a good deal of the knave in his composition. (BF, pp. 28-29)²

1 Each colony had its own currency.

2 Franklin's negative opinion was reinforced when he met Keimer's wife during his first stay in

1.1 Cultivating a Network of Free Thinkers

Now established in the town and gainfully employed, Franklin immediately sought out “lovers of reading” and he spent his evenings with them in “pleasant conversation,” again a legacy of his father. Shortly after his arrival, he happened to meet Sir William Keith, the governor of what was then called the “Province of Pennsylvania.” As it turns out, Sir Keith was also a “free thinker,” a Deist like himself and, despite their difference in age, it appears to be one of the reasons the two men developed a firm friendship. He gives the following account of their encounter. It is only one of many such entries in his *Autobiography* in which he reveals his weakness for flattery:

I appear'd a young man of promising parts, and therefore should be encouraged; the printers at Philadelphia were wretched ones; and, if I would set up there, he made no doubt I should succeed; for his part, he would procure me the public business, and do me every other service in his power. (BF, pp. 30-31)

So, not only did he accept work from Keimer but Franklin now schemed to take over his business as well as Mr. Bradford's. He recounts that, one day, Governor Keith and Colonel Robert French called upon him at the printing shop to invite him to accompany them for a drink:

...With a condescension of politeness I had been quite unus'd to, he made me many compliments, desired to be acquainted with me, blam'd me kindly for not having made myself known to him when I first came to the place, and would have me away with him to the tavern, where he was going with Colonel French to taste, as he said, some excellent Madeira. (BF, p. 20)

Once again, young Franklin's ego swelled with the attention of such high-ranking, illustrious figures and this account reveals his ambition to rise socially. Meanwhile, he writes, Keimer, who thought these gentlemen had come to do business with him, “star'd like a pig poison'd” (ibid.).³

The affable governor often met with Franklin and encouraged him to sail to London, promising him financial support for the purchase of types, etc. to start his own business in Philadelphia. Considering Franklin was only seventeen, it is remarkable that Governor Keith and Sir Robert French manifested such confidence in him. As proof of their sponsorship, they wrote an enthusiastic letter of support to Franklin's father Josiah commenting on Franklin's outstanding character, intelligence and capacities. Governor Keith and Sir French instructed Benjamin to hand-carry this letter to Boston where he would present it to his father with their proposal to share in the costs of setting him up in business.

London. She explained how he had mistreated her and finally abandoned her.

3 Notice that the spelling here suggests that he pronounced “stared” as [stæ:ɪd], just as he did “star” [stæ:ɪ] (cf. Chapter 19 for more examples).

Thanks to his frugality, after months of hard work, Franklin had saved up enough money to purchase himself a fine suit and a watch. Upon his arrival in Boston, Franklin could not resist the temptation of stopping by his brother James's printing shop whereupon he bragged to his brother's employees about the good life in Philadelphia. When they asked what kind of money they had in Pennsylvania, he pulled out a handful of silver coins (paper money being the norm in Massachusetts at the time). He then showed them his brand-new watch. His brother's reaction was "glum and sullen; I gave them a piece of eight for a drink and took my leave" (BF, p. 31).

His visit so offended James that, when their mother, Abiah, attempted to reconcile her two sons and expressed "her wishes to see us on good terms together, and that we might live for the future as brothers, he said I had insulted him in such a manner before his people that he could never forget or forgive it." This is one of the few entries in his *Autobiography* where any direct mention of his mother is made (cf. Chapter 2 for de Cabanis's testimony of Franklin's expressions of affection and respect for his mother).

Unfortunately for Franklin, he was not yet legally an adult and, even worse, had violated his indentures. His father, though, was pleased to see that Benjamin had done so well for himself in so short a time and that he had obtained the support of such eminent individuals in Philadelphia. Nevertheless, he expressed doubts about setting up his son in business at such a young age. He also questioned the Governor's wisdom in entrusting such a young man to take on such heavy responsibilities. He concluded that Keith must be a man "of small discretion to think of setting a boy up in business who wanted yet three years of being at man's estate." Benjamin's brother-in-law, however, said that he would do what he could to support the plan, "but my father was clear in the impropriety of it, and at last gave a flat denial to it" (BF, pp. 31-32).

On leaving Boston, Josiah Franklin warned his son again that his provocative character might get him into trouble and advised him:

...to behave respectfully to the people there [in Philadelphia], endeavor to obtain the general esteem, and avoid lampooning and libeling, to which he thought I had too much inclination; telling me, that by steady industry and a prudent parsimony I might save enough by the time I was one-and-twenty to set me up; and that, if I came near the matter, he would help me out with the rest. (BF, p. 32)

As we shall see shortly, this is yet another instance in which Franklin's trust in his father's judgment was well-founded.

Convinced of the Governor's support and patronage, Franklin decided to ship out to London. Nevertheless, before doing so, he was obliged to return to Philadelphia to put his affairs in order. Upon his return, he worked for a time at Keimer's print shop and, at this stage of *Autobiography*, Franklin now reveals a rather conniving side of his nature which he displays from time to

time in his writings: "Keimer and I liv'd on a pretty good familiar footing, and agreed tolerably well, for he suspected nothing of my setting up." We have already observed his disdain for the man and, in another extract from his *Autobiography*, Franklin could not refrain from mocking him yet again. Keimer loved argumentation and disputations which enabled Franklin to practice his superior debating skills.

I used to work him so with my Socratic method, and had trepann'd him so often by questions apparently so distant from any point we had in hand, and yet by degrees lead to the point, and brought him into difficulties and contradictions, that at last he grew ridiculously cautious, and would hardly answer me the most common question, without asking first, "What do you intend to infer from that?"... (BF, p. 37)

Franklin's next trick was to convince Keimer to go on a vegetarian diet. "I assur'd him it would (i.e., be good for his constitution), and that he would be the better for it. He was usually a great glutton, and I promised myself some diversion in half starving him" (ibid.).

1.2 An Informal Literary Club

During these months prior to his departure for London, Franklin made the acquaintance of a group of young intellectuals, all well-read men and specialists in a variety of fields. The most important of these were Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson and James Ralph, "all lovers of reading." Osborne and Watson were clerks to Charles Brogden, "an eminent scrivener or conveyancer." He described Watson as a pious, sensible young man of great integrity, values Franklin appears to genuinely admire in others.

He describes his other friends as lax in their religious principles, in particular Ralph, who determined to head back to England along with Franklin. In so doing, his plan was to abandon his wife and child. Nevertheless, this did not stop Franklin from considering him as his closest friend. His description of the bonds uniting his four friends casts light on those human and intellectual qualities he admired most.

Osborne was sensible, candid, frank; sincere and affectionate to his friends; but, in literary matters, too fond of criticising. Ralph was ingenious, genteel in his manners, *and extremely eloquent; I think I never knew a prettier talker* (my italics). Both of them were great admirers of poetry, and began to try their hands in little pieces. Many pleasant walks we four had together on Sundays into the woods, near Schuylkill, where we read to one another, and conferr'd on what we read. (BF, p. 38)

Here we have one of Franklin's rare allusions to spoken English. Ralph is described as "extremely eloquent" and "a pretty talker" but, unfortunately, no mention of accent is made here. We shall return to this point in Chapter

14 when Franklin discusses his ideals of language propriety. This passage can be compared to Franklin's effusive praise of George Whitefield's eloquence and rhetorical skills that he exhibited in his sermons.

Ralph comes across as an affable but extremely conceited character who had such an elevated esteem for his intellectual abilities that, upon his arrival in England, he refused any work that he considered "beneath" him. He was absolutely convinced that he would become one of England's greatest poets despite the fact that both Osborne and Franklin had assured him he had no real talent for it. Recalling his father's stern rebukes after having composed two popular ballads at the age of thirteen, Franklin added: "I approv'd the amusing one's self with poetry now and then, so far as to improve one's language, but no farther" (BF, p. 38). Ralph entertained this belief until Alexander Pope demolished his reputation as a poet a few years later in a critical review.

Osborne eventually left for the West Indies, where he acquired substantial wealth as a lawyer. He died young, however, and, at this point in Franklin's narrative, we have a taste of his sense of humour when he adds: "He and I had made a serious agreement, that the one who happen'd first to die should, if possible, make a friendly visit to the other, and acquaint him how he found things in that separate state. But he never fulfill'd his promise." As for Watson, he died a few years later in Franklin's arms, "much lamented being the best of our set" (BF, p. 40).

These anecdotes are further examples of Franklin's love of language and literature but also of his desire to be surrounded by "ingenious" people capable of stimulating his intellect. This literary group of young thinkers served as an inspiration for his Junto Club, which he was to found upon his return to Philadelphia in 1727 after his year-and-a-half stay in London.

2. Franklin's First Visit to England (1724-1726)

As he prepared for his departure for England, Franklin took leave of his friends and also exchanged promises of marriage with Miss Deborah Read. However, when the matter came to the attention of her mother, his proposal was refused on the grounds that Franklin had no stable employment. She added that the couple could marry upon his return to Philadelphia only but after he would be firmly established as a printer. This decision was to prove to be the cause of much disappointment and sadness for both Franklin and Miss Read who were finally wed in 1730. In many respects, Mrs. Read's interference cast a pall on their future married life.

Prior to his departure, Governor Keith summoned Franklin to inform him that "setting me up was always mention'd as a fixed thing. I was to take with me letters recommendatory to a number of his friends, besides the letter of credit

to furnish me with the necessary money for purchasing the press and types, paper, etc.”

Franklin's account of his first journey to England is significant in that he once again displays his obsession with being well-considered by people of rank. Once on board, Franklin, accompanied by his friend Ralph, were forced to find berths in the steerage of the ship because “none on board knowing us, we were considered as ordinary persons,” a situation which must certainly have vexed Franklin. For the reasons given in Chapter 1, his fixation on social status and genteel behaviour is very informative and in keeping with his views on “polite language,” an intimately related subject.

Also on board was a respected lawyer from Philadelphia, Mr. Andrew Hamilton and Mr. Denham, a wealthy Quaker merchant, as well as Messrs. Onion and Russel, masters of an iron work in Maryland.

Colonel French coming on board, and showing me great respect, I was more taken notice of, and, with my friend Ralph, invited by the other gentlemen to come into the cabin, there being now room... (BF, p. 41)

During the passage across the Atlantic, he and Mr. Denham developed a strong and long-lasting friendship which continued until the latter's death a few years later.

Upon landing in London on the 24th of December 1724, on the eve of his 19th birthday (January 6), Franklin discovered that all of Governor Keith's promises and letters were merely hot air and deception. It is likely, however, that when Keith discovered that Franklin's father had refused to contribute to his own son's establishment as a printer, Keith must have wondered why he should be left to bear the financial burden on his own.

When Franklin told Mr. Denham of Governor Keith's assurances, he “laught at the notion of the governor's giving me a letter of credit, having, as he said, no credit to give” (BF, p. 43). Franklin, in this instance, shows an admirable, forgiving side of his character and writes the following:

But what shall we think of a governor's playing such pitiful tricks, and imposing so grossly on a poor ignorant boy! It was a habit he had acquired. He wish'd to please everybody; and, having little to give, he gave expectations. He was otherwise an ingenious, sensible man, a pretty good writer, and *a good governor for the people* (my italics), tho' not for his constituents, the proprietaries, whose instructions he sometimes disregarded. Several of our best laws were of his planning and passed during his administration. (BF, p. 43-44)

The clear implication here is that Keith, whatever his personal flaws, stood with the common people and against the Lords-Proprietors who reigned over the colonies in the name of the King. Despite their enormous wealth, the Proprietors were grossly negligent in caring for the well-being of the common people of

Pennsylvania who made up the mass of the population. With the outbreak of the third war with France over the control of North America (1744-1763), Franklin's bitter quarrels with these men and their allies in the House of Lords were to have far-reaching implications and effects. More importantly from a geopolitical perspective, the consequences of these wars were to be one of the leading causes for the Americans' growing disaffection with the monarchy.

2.1 Honing his Printing Skills and Sowing his Wild Oats

Once they had arrived in London, Franklin and Ralph took up lodgings in Little Britain, an area of London where there were many "free-thinkers." Franklin immediately found work at Palmer's, a respected printing-house in Bartholomew Close. There he worked for over a year. During his time in London, he was completely awed by the possibilities for advancement in this bustling city and, more particularly, the opportunities it offered for furthering his intellectual pursuits. There were other more worldly activities involving "naughty girls" about whom he makes a few fleeting allusions in his *Autobiography* and other writings.

At this point, Franklin acknowledges one of the "great errata" of his life. Once in London, however, he forgot, "by degrees, my engagements with Miss Read, to whom I never wrote more than one letter, and that was to let her know I was not likely soon to return." Likewise, his friend Ralph "seem'd quite to forget his wife and child" (BF, p. 44).

Not long after he had begun working at Palmer's he was busy composing for the second edition of Wollaston's *Religion of Nature*, a work on Deism which he took the time to read. Franklin considered some of the author's reasoning to be faulty and decided to redact a metaphysical piece in favour of Deism entitled "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain" which he dedicated (inscribed) to his best friend Ralph. The publication of this dissertation soon came to the attention of Mr. Palmer, which "occasion'd my being more consider'd" as "a young man of some *ingenuity*, tho' he seriously expostulated with me upon the principles of my pamphlet, which to him appear'd abominable" (BF, p. 44). After a time, Franklin himself came to realize that some of the principles on which his own analysis was founded were imperfect, and he acknowledged it to be another of his "errata." In later years, he sought to have all the printed examples of his pamphlet destroyed.

With regard to his status as a printer, one of the advantages of living in London was his having direct access to books. The printing of his dissertation, despite its provocative nature, nevertheless attracted the attention of Mr. Lyons, a surgeon, Deist and author of a book entitled *The Infallibility of Human Judgment*. Lyons invited Franklin to Batson's Coffee-house in Cheapside where

he met Dr. Bernard Mandeville, another celebrated Deist, and a Dr. Pemberton, who promised him the opportunity of meeting Sir Isaac Newton, “of which I was extremely desirous; but this never happened” (BF, p. 44). Newton was probably ill at this time and died only two years afterwards. Newton and Franklin’s visions of natural philosophy were certainly very similar in the sense that, in ways closely linked to views regarding the “Great Chain of Being” discussed earlier (cf. Pope’s poem, Chapter 1), both men considered the universe to be a minutely calibrated, machine-like entity which could be studied rationally with mathematical precision. Only in this way could mankind hope to obtain any precise notion of God’s true nature (cf. Franklin’s experiments on lightning and electricity in Chapter 5).

Aside from Isaac Newton’s well-known scientific pursuits, he had also written a pronunciation guide for the English language as a young student at Cambridge in 1661 (cf. Dobson, 1968, 246-253). His English, however, was characterized by remarkable archaisms betraying his conservative Lincolnshire pronunciation (cf. Chapter 15, Chapter 23). For instance, he advocated the pronunciation of [x] after back vowels in words such as “thought” “through,” “rough,” etc. just as in conservative modern Scots (cf. Chapter 23, Chapter 27). Had the two men met, Franklin would have heard this and many other traits typical of his Lincolnshire speech. Variant (and even highly dialectal) pronunciations among men and women, even those with high levels of education, must have been so common that it appears to have attracted relatively little attention in England itself. However, the koineization of colonial American English which took place during the first century of settlement resulted in a remarkable process of levelling, which 18th-century English visitors found baffling (see Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 for discussion). Again, what seems to have mattered most to them was clear articulation and the ability to master the written language and reproduce correct grammar in speech, preferably in some form of modified accent. From all indications, Franklin’s accent appears not to have shocked any of his English contemporaries and no mention of it is made in the sources I have investigated.

Although the orthoepists had been struggling to define a cultivated pronunciation for “polite” speakers since the 16th century, they were not successful in eliminating the strong regional accents, even among the best educated. Nevertheless, as Beal (2010, 23) points out, the remarkable proliferation of pronunciation guides after 1760, including Franklin’s 1768 RMS, reflect the need among members of the rapidly rising middle class of young entrepreneurs of common origin who were seeking to modify their broad regional accents in a way that would allow them to be viewed with greater respect by the London gentry and aristocratic class.

2.2 On the Shortcomings of Deism

Around this time, Franklin and his best friend Ralph met a young woman he describes as a milliner (hat-maker) and whom he describes as “genteelly bred.” Franklin seems to have been thoroughly taken by the woman, describing her as “sensible and lively, and of most pleasing conversation,” but it is Ralph who won her affection. Ralph would read her plays in the evenings and, after a time, they “grew intimate” and moved in together. She had had a child from a previous relationship and, given her circumstances, Ralph decided to leave London and accepted a job as teacher in a country school in Berkshire.

This, however, he deemed a business below him, and confident of future better fortune, when he should be unwilling to have it known that he once was so meanly employed, he changed his name, and did me the honor to assume mine. (BF, p. 45)

In the meantime, having lost her friends and business on account of her scandalous relationship with Ralph, this young woman was:

often in distress, and us’d to send for me, and borrow what I could spare to help her out of them. I grew fond of her company, and, *being at that time under no religious restraint* (my italics), and presuming upon my importance to her, I attempted familiarities (another erratum) which she repuls’d with proper resentment, and acquainted him with my behaviour. (BF, p. 45)

This incident also reveals another facet of Franklin’s character, which he discloses with great candour and forthrightness. Because he considered himself a Deist and was no longer inhibited by any official religious constraints, it was quite obvious that his intention was to have a sexual relationship with Ralph’s girlfriend. Ralph discovered Franklin’s betrayal and broke off the friendship.

Although Franklin was certainly disappointed with this turn of events, at a practical level, the incident served as a convenient pretext for both parties who were now freed of their financial obligations. Ralph and his girlfriend owed Franklin a debt of £27, a small fortune for him and, now that their friendship had ended, the couple announced that they would not repay him. On the other hand, Franklin took some consolation knowing that from now on they would never borrow money from him again: “In the loss of his friendship I found myself relieved from a burthen” (BF, p. 46).

2.3 Maturing Process

Following this episode, Franklin left Palmer’s to work at Watts’ Printing House, near Lincoln’s Inn Fields, which he describes as “a still greater printing-house” (BF, p. 46) where he worked for the rest of his stay in London. It may be during this first stay that Franklin became acquainted with 16th- and 17th-century orthoepists, Sir Thomas Smith, John Hart, John Wallis, John Wilkins,

Alexander Gil and others. These were the first to propose the modernization of English orthography in a way that would reflect the prescribed London-area pronunciation(s) of the time (cf. Chapter 13).

While employed at Watts', Franklin came to be known as the "Water-American" by the other workmen because he refused to drink beer during the workday. Franklin explains that there was a belief among the workmen that "strong beer" made for strong workmen. For this reason, they were surprised to see the sober Franklin carrying "a large form of types in each hand," something his co-workers were unable to do. He describes his workmates as "great guzzlers of beer" which they imbibed throughout the entire day. For this purpose, each worker was expected to contribute 4 or 5 shillings per week towards his daily ration of beer, something Franklin refused to do. However, his co-workers made life so difficult for him that he was finally obliged to renege and make his contribution. "And thus these poor devils keep themselves always under" (ibid.). Despite obvious contradictions in Franklin's behaviour, we sense another aspect of the cultural gap between the "Water-American," bred in the austere culture of Puritan New England and Quaker Philadelphia, and London's hard-drinking working class.

After a short while, Franklin was promoted to a job in the composing room where, once again, five more shillings were demanded of him for his share of drink. Since he had already paid this sum to the pressmen, he refused to pay more and in this he was supported by Mr. Watts himself.

I stood out two or three weeks, was accordingly considered as an excommunicate, and had had so many little pieces of private mischief done me, by mixing my sorts, transposing my pages, breaking my matter, etc., etc., if I were ever so little out of the room, and all ascribed to the chappel ghost, which they said ever haunted those not regularly admitted, that, notwithstanding the master's protection, I found myself oblig'd to comply and pay the money, convinc'd of the folly of being on ill terms with those one is to live with continually. (BF, pp. 46-47)

After this, however, he soon "acquir'd considerable influence" among his workmates by proposing that they reduce their intake of beer in exchange for a richer and cheaper breakfast from a neighbouring house. Aside from keeping their heads clear, those that followed his advice also saved money in the long run. "This, and my being esteem'd a pretty good "riggite,"⁴ supported my consequence in the society" ... "and my uncommon quickness at composing occasioned my being put upon all work of dispatch, which was generally better paid. So, I went on now very agreeably" (BF, p. 48).

These anecdotes suggest the extent to which he was able to interact within this printing establishment of journeymen and printers (cf. Chapter 10 the bond between "institution" and "idiom") who spoke a vernacular variety of London English among themselves. For him to have been considered as a "riggite" by

4 A jocular verbal satirist.

his beer-swilling colleagues at Watts' Printing House, there can be little doubt that Franklin was capable of code-switching and he had to have been intimately familiar with this London working-class dialect. Since he was also invited by some of the most brilliant men in London at Batson's Coffee-house, it is clear they also considered him an equal, at least in terms of intellect if not in social status. Here too, his English shifted to a disparitary register when addressing these men.

Many years afterwards, in the summer of 1768, during Franklin's long stay in London, we learn that he returned to Watts' at which time he met some of the printers who were employed at the very same press he used as a journeyman in his youth. Considering that he proposed his RMS (*Reformed Mode of Spelling*) in July of that year and had designed six lead characters for that purpose, I am convinced that the purpose of his visit to Watts' Printing House was to cast his new lead characters there. It would thus be in payment for their assistance and friendship that he would have offered them "a gallon of porter" (cf. Chapter 8).



Fig. 3.1 The Franklin Common Press (ca. 1720), National Museum of American History, CC0, https://www.si.edu/object/franklin-common-press%3Anmah_882271⁵

5 A plaque attached to the press in 1833 is inscribed with the following: "Dr. Franklin's remarks

3. Back in Philadelphia (1726)

One senses that, after nearly two years in London, Franklin had learnt all he had to know about the printing and publishing business and was setting his sights elsewhere. Nevertheless, at this point in his *Autobiography*, Franklin writes that he had begun to tire of life in London and wanted to return to Pennsylvania. It was around this time that he encountered Mr. Denham, the Quaker merchant whom he had befriended during the crossing to London in December 1724. Mr. Denham was obviously impressed by Franklin's work ethic, frugality and intelligence and he proposed that he become his clerk for a salary of £50 per month (in Pennsylvania money). It was not quite as much as he had earned as a compositor with Watts, but it afforded "a better prospect." His long-term plan was to learn the mercantile business under Mr. Denham's guidance and, at length, succeed Mr. Denham at the head of his business.

Imagining that this was the end of his career as a printer, Franklin tendered his resignation to Mr. Watts, summing up his stay in London by saying that he had worked very diligently but, owing to the loans he had made to his friend Ralph and his girlfriend, he had struggled financially during all the time he lived there. In another revealing passage, he states that, "I lov'd him (Ralph), notwithstanding, for he had many amiable qualities; but I had picked up some very ingenious acquaintance, whose conversation was of great advantage to me; and I had read considerably" (BF, p. 51). Despite his ambition to become a wealthy businessman, one sees that, on balance, he preferred good company, culture and stimulating conversation to making money. Having said this, he never refrained from the opportunity to do both.

Franklin and Mr. Denham set sail for America from Gravesend on July 23, 1726, and arrived in Philadelphia on October 11th. Franklin was now twenty years old. Miss Read, to whom he had only written once during his year-and-a-half stay in London, had concluded that he would never return to America. Bitterly disappointed, she had married a certain Mr. Rogers, a talented and

relative to this press made when he came to England as agent of the Massachusetts in the year 1768. The Dr. at this time visited the printing office of Mr. Watts of Wild Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, & going up to this particular press (afterwards in the possession of Messrs. Cox & Son of Great Queen Street of whome it was purchased.). Thus address'd the men who were working at it. 'Come my friends we will drink together: it is now forty years since I worked like you at this press, as a journeyman printer'. The Dr. then sent for a gallon porter & he drank with them. "Success to printing." From the above it will appear that it is 108 years since Dr. Franklin worked at this identical press." June 1833, National Museum of American History, Behring Center. See https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_882271. *Timperley's Encyclopedia of Literary and Typographic Anecdote* offers a near identical account of his visit to Watts's Printing House. During his visit at this time, he went to Mr. Watts' Printing office in Wildcourt, Lincoln's Inn-fields; and entering the press-room, proceeded to a particular press, where two men were at work: "Come, my friends," said he, "we will drink together; it is now forty years since I worked like you at this press, as a journeyman printer." A gallon of porter was sent for, and the three drank "Success to Printing!" So much for the Water American.

successful potter. Shortly after the wedding, however, she discovered that her new husband was already married and, as it turned out, a complete scoundrel. She refused to take his name or cohabit with a bigamist and promptly returned to her parents' home. When his secret was discovered, Rogers escaped to the West Indies where, it was said, he died the following year. Since there was no proof of his death, however, the marriage could not be annulled.

Mr. Denham opened his store on Water Street, Philadelphia and Franklin grew, "in a little time, expert at selling." He and Franklin lodged together and, "having a sincere regard for me," Mr. Denham "counsell'd me as a father...", "I respected and lov'd him." At the beginning of February 1727, however, he and Franklin both contracted "pleurisy" which nearly killed him. Mr. Denham was not so lucky, and he died from the illness, bequeathing Franklin a small inheritance.

Denham's death profoundly affected Franklin, and he writes that it "left me once more to the wide world" (BF, p 52). His near-death experience also appears to have pushed him to reflect on and reconsider some of the more radical aspects of his deist beliefs. While he never totally rejected them, from this point on, he became less provocative and antagonistic towards his Presbyterian faith.

3.1 Keimer's Assistant (1727-1728)

Following his return, Keimer encouraged Franklin to return to his shop and take up the management of his printing-house so that he could focus his attention on developing his "station's shop." During Franklin's time in London, however, he had met Keimer's wife and her friends who provided details regarding his "bad character" and, confident of the truth of their declarations, Franklin states that he wanted to have nothing more to do with him. Franklin does not specify what he had done to merit such a bad reputation, but it does explain his antipathy towards him.

Keimer had given Franklin the task of training his journeymen and developing their skills as printers. One of these was a Welsh Pennsylvania farmer by the name of Hugh Meredith whom he describes as "honest, sensible and having a great deal of solid observation." He was also "something of a reader" but "given to drink." It is probable that Meredith's family language was Welsh, and they may have been among the numerous North Welsh Quakers who settled in Pennsylvania. The significance of this outwardly minor detail will be seen in Chapter 13 in the discussion of Franklin's decision to use the <u> character to represent [ə] (cf. Chapter 16, *Price* words). The significance of this is that <y> is the symbol used in Welsh to represent [ə] and one hypothesis is that he discovered its value when he became familiar with the rudiments of the Welsh language in his contacts with Hugh and his father. As we shall see, over time, he

printed a number of Welsh-language proverbs and sayings in his *Poor Richard's Almanack* for the benefit of the Welsh community, thus demonstrating that he had at least some knowledge of Welsh pronunciation and orthography.

Another of his workmates was Stephen Potts, another young farmer, who is described as having "great wit and humor," but somewhat lazy. In addition to this was a young country boy named David, as well as Harry, the apprentice, both Pennsylvanians, and John -----, a "wild Irishman brought up to no business" and who, shortly afterward, ran away... Finally, he discusses George Webb at some length, originally from Gloucester and an "Oxford scholar" who, after falling into bad company in London, had squandered all his money and, in order to pay off his debts, had been obliged to contract himself out as an indentured servant in America. "He was lively, witty, good-natur'd, and a pleasant companion, but idle, thoughtless, and imprudent to the last degree" (BF, p. 55).

If I have taken the time to mention their names and the origins of these workmates, it is simply to provide the reader with another example of the sociolinguistic context in which Franklin lived and worked in Philadelphia which, as we shall see, was demographically the least "English" of all the colonies in America. Although the majority of the population was composed of English Quakers, most with roots in the Northwest Midlands, the multi-dialectalism which characterizes Franklin's working environment here provides us with a glimpse into the social, ethnic and hence linguistic variety of the Philadelphians during Franklin's day. The difference here, however, is that these men were all literate and, because of their profession, had a good command of the rising standard language. The idiom spoken among them was certainly entirely different than that used by men from the same regions who spoke broad dialect in working environments (agricultural settings, etc.) (cf. the definition and interrelatedness of "idiom" and "institution" in Chapter 10).

Yet, at no time does he ever mention any distinction between "American" English as opposed to "English" or even "British" or "Welsh-English" pronunciation or grammar. This is a fact which reveals as much about the sociolinguistic context of the period as it does about "American" as opposed to "English" or "British" linguistic identity, a subject which will be discussed in greater depth in Part II (Chapters 10-15) and Part V (Chapters 29-30). In that context, we discuss the nature of the developing American koines which had emerged in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania during the first century of settlement. In Part III (Chapters 16-24), we attempt to identify the competing phonetic variants ("phonetic range" and "feature pool," cf. Chapter 11) in New England and Pennsylvania.

Franklin suspected that Keimer had offered him high wages in order to train his journeymen so that, at length, he could eventually dismiss him and replace him with lesser paid workers. As it turned out, his suspicions were well-

founded. It is at this point that Franklin provides some detail about the skills he had mastered in London.

Our printing-house often wanted sorts,⁶ and there was no letter-founder in America; I had seen types cast at James's in London, but without much attention to the manner; however, I now contrived a mould, made use of the letters we had as puncheons, struck the matrices in lead, and thus supply'd in a pretty tolerable way all deficiencies. I also engrav'd several things on occasion; I made the ink; I was warehouseman, and everything, and, in short, quite a *factotum*.⁷ (BF, p. 54)

These technical details are pertinent to our discussion in that we learn that Franklin was essentially a one-man show in Keimer's printing-shop and was perfectly capable of creating new characters for his printing press. We saw above that this is precisely what he did in 1768 when he cast six new characters for his new phonemically-based alphabet. I shall argue that I consider this to be an indirect contribution to our modern International Phonetic Alphabet (cf. Chapters 25 and 29, particularly the discussion concerning Sir William Jones). The question of when the idea of creating his new English alphabet came to him has already been addressed and we shall return to a more detailed technical discussion of this question in Part IV (Chapters 25-28).

As the weeks rolled by and his trainees became increasingly skilled in their tasks, as Franklin had foreseen, Keimer declared to Franklin that his wages were too high. Furthermore, Keimer became progressively disagreeable and aggressive with Franklin. One day, hearing a loud noise in the street, Franklin rushed to the window to see what had happened. Keimer, who was standing outside the shop, looked up and yelled at Franklin ordering him to mind his business and get back to work. All the neighbours who were also peering out of their windows heard Keimer's stern public rebuke. Thoroughly humiliated and enraged, Franklin was now ready for a fight. A quarrel ensued with "high words pass'd on both sides" at which point Franklin snatched up his hat and stomped out the door. This gives a rare indication of Franklin's temper and prickly sense of pride. In a humiliating dressing-down before the King's Privy Council in 1774, Franklin would not be nearly so combative.

Hugh Meredith, who had "conceiv'd a great regard" for Franklin, tried to dissuade him from returning to his "native country" (i.e. the Massachusetts Colony) which he had contemplated for a short time. Meredith pointed out that he was aware that Keimer had fallen into debt and that his business would soon fail. Meredith then informed Franklin that his father had "a high opinion" of him. This was undoubtedly because Franklin had succeeded in convincing the young Meredith to shun "dram-drinking." Franklin added that he hoped that his

6 "A block or plate with an empty space in the center, into which a type, types, another block, or a plate, can be fitted, so that all print together" (Suarez and Woudhuysen, 2010).

7 Latin meaning "do everything," "someone who does everything."

friend would abandon that “wretched habit entirely.” The two men then took the decision to found their own printing-house. As part of the agreement, Mr. Meredith proposed to advance the money necessary to set up Franklin and his son as business partners. This was agreed upon and the press and equipment were promptly ordered from acquaintances Franklin had made in London.

This incident provides us with another glimpse of the wily side of Franklin's nature, a trait that would serve him well, not only in business but, later in his career, as a statesman and negotiator. A few days after the confrontation, Keimer signed an agreement to print paper money for the New Jersey Colony. His problem, however, was that “the cuts and the various types” were of a kind that only Franklin could supply. Swallowing his pride, Keimer approached Franklin, telling him that “old friends” should not part because of a few rash, heated words, and called on him to return to work.

In this he was encouraged by Hugh Meredith, who hoped further training with Franklin would “give him more opportunity for his improvement.” For this “New Jersey jobb” (BF, p. 56), he imagined and created a copperplate press which was the first of the kind that had been seen in “the country” of Pennsylvania and he “cut several ornaments and checks for the bills.” Ironically, Keimer was extremely well paid for this project and, thanks to Franklin's skills, remained in business for considerably longer than would have otherwise been the case.

3.2 Paper Money: Another Financial Opportunity

Once again, later in his *Autobiography*, Franklin cannot resist voicing his utter disdain for Keimer. While in Burlington, New Jersey, several members of the New Jersey Assembly were present to oversee that no more money would be printed than had been ordered by law.

My mind having been much more improv'd by reading than Keimer's, I suppose it was for that reason my conversation seem'd to be more valu'd. They had me to their houses, introduced me to their friends, and show'd me much civility; while he, tho' the master, was a little neglected. In truth, he was an odd fish; ignorant of common life, fond of rudely opposing receiv'd opinions, slovenly to extream dirtiness, enthusiastic in some points of religion, and a little knavish withal. (BF, p. 57)

One of these acquaintances, Isaac Decow, a self-made man who had “acquir'd a good estate” through his hard work and wise handling of his investments, told the young Franklin that:

I foresee that you will soon work this man out of business, and make a fortune in it at Philadelphia. He had not then the least intimation of my intention to set up there or anywhere. *These friends were afterwards of great use to me* (my italics), as I occasionally was to some of them. They all continued their regard for me as long as they lived. (BF, p. 57)

Here Franklin exposes, once again, his visceral need to be admired and well-considered by people of note. This also signals how the most marked social class barriers were beginning to break down, at least for the emerging middle class composed of talented and ambitious business men of common origin. Franklin was clearly one of these rising stars of the non-aristocratic social class described here. As we shall see in Part V, his close associations and dealings with the higher ranks of London society during his stay there as a colonial agent (1758-1775), coupled with his London-centred views regarding linguistic propriety, were not shared by his future collaborator, Noah Webster (cf. Chapters 13, 29 and 30).

Franklin highlights his profound admiration for people who, though of humble origin, had made a fortune for themselves through their industry and “shrewd and sagacious” handling of their business dealings. This view of Franklin as a successful businessman and incarnation of a primitive form of the “American dream” has sparked fierce criticism in some quarters. As S. C. Arch (2008, 159) explains, “Max Weber saw in him ‘the incarnation and spirit of capitalism’. D. H. Lawrence saw him as an ‘unemotional automaton’ while others viewed him as the original ‘self-made man.’” Nian S. Huang and Carla Mulford (2008, 156) write, however, that critics “did insist that, contrary to the popular assumption that Franklin’s model elevated the human condition, his model degraded it by making life seem simplistic and success inevitable.”

Although a similar class of self-made men was rising in Great Britain in the coming Industrial Revolution, Franklin’s success story is interesting in that it highlights one of the fundamental social differences between America and England towards the end of the 18th century. In England, the new class of bourgeois entrepreneurs were forced to find their place within a pre-existing framework controlled by a jealous aristocratic elite which continued to wield political and economic power. In North America, the dominant class was also composed of wealthy, ambitious entrepreneurs, but they were beholden only to the colonial administrators, parliamentary leaders and the Crown itself (at least six weeks journey away by ship). The aristocratic caste was largely absent in the colonies, with the exception of Virginia (cf. Chapter 12). As we shall see, in many respects, the growing schism between England and America at this time had more to do with social class identity than any other single factor.

Shortly after returning to Philadelphia from New Jersey, the new types and press Meredith and Franklin had ordered finally arrived from London. After settling with Keimer, the two men looked for new lodgings and found a house. In order to lower the rent, they took in a family which agreed to pay the greater part of the charges. It is in this house that Meredith and Franklin set up their business.

With all their cash nearly expended, they received their first order thanks to a friend named George House who paid them five shillings for the work. These

were their first earnings which, Franklin exclaimed, "gave me more pleasure than any crown I have since earned; and the gratitude I felt toward House has made me often more ready than perhaps I should otherwise have been to assist young beginners" (BF, p. 59).

This again reflects several aspects of his character which we observe throughout his lifetime: diligence, thriftiness and solid business sense, but also a merciless competitive streak. After this point, Franklin flies from success to success and, despite his young age, becomes increasingly influential in his adopted town of Philadelphia, achieving recognition and a respect which he could never have dreamt of in London.

3.4 The Junto (1727)

Perhaps because he missed the intellectually stimulating and enriching meetings with his friends in London, Franklin and his new acquaintances founded a club, the object being their own "mutual improvement," but also the desire to devise ways to contribute to the well-being of the community (cf. Chapter 4).

They called their secret, twelve-member club "the Junto" (meaning an association of people who join in a common cause), also known as the "Leather Apron Club." The group met every Friday to address questions regarding "Morals, Politics, or natural philosophy to be discussed and debated by all the members" but also their business affairs. Their debates were to be formally conducted following strict rules with a view to respecting the "sincere spirit of inquiry after truth, without fondness for dispute, or desire of victory; and, to prevent warmth, all expressions of positiveness in opinions, or direct contradiction" (BF, pp. 60-61). Thanks to the Socratic method of debate which Franklin had come to master by this time, we recognize here that he had matured sufficiently to understand the importance of civil, productive discussion. Every three months, each member of the Junto was called upon to write an essay on any topic he pleased which he would then read aloud to the other twelve members⁸ of the club (whom Franklin described as "my *ingenious* acquaintance").

The men came from all walks of life: a surveyor, who loved books and poetry, a shoe-maker, who loved reading but who was also interested in astrology. Another was a "most exquisite mechanic, and a solid, sensible man." Meredith and his other colleagues from Keimer's printing-shop were also members. However, Franklin criticized one member, a self-taught mathematician, in particularly harsh terms, saying "he knew little out of his way, and was not a pleasing companion; as, like most great mathematicians I have met, he expected universal precision in everything said, or was for ever denying or distinguishing

8 An allusion (serious or humoristic) to the twelve disciples?

upon trifles, to the disturbance of all conversation. He soon left us" (BF, p. 60).

One man stands out above all the rest, however, one William Coleman, "a merchant's clerk" who had "the coolest, clearest head, the best heart, and exactest morals of almost any man I ever met with. Our friendship continued without interruption to his death, upward of forty years; and the club continued almost as long, and was the best school of philosophy, morality and politics that then existed in the province" (ibid.). Here again, we have a better idea of the fundamental principles which drove Franklin to improve himself and elevate the standards of his fellow citizens.

One of the objectives of the Junto was to further the business interests of each member. An example of how Franklin and Meredith benefited from this secret society is an order that Junto member Joseph Breintnall⁹ procured from the Quakers, namely, an order to print forty sheets of the history of their religious community, "a folio, pro patria size, in pica, with long primer notes." Franklin composed one sheet a day while Meredith "worked it off at press." In this anecdote, Franklin promotes his own diligence.

So determin'd I was to continue doing a sheet a day of the folio, that one night, when, having impos'd my forms, I thought my day's work over; one of them by accident was broken, and two pages reduced to pi, I immediately distributed and compos'd it over again before I went to bed; and this industry, visible to our neighbors, began to give us character and credit. (BF, p. 61)

It is clear that he flaunted his hard work to the public as often as possible. In particular, a certain Dr. Baird, hailing from St. Andrew's in Scotland, made flattering statements about Franklin's remarkable work ethic.

"For the industry of that Franklin," says he, "is superior to any thing I ever saw of the kind; I see him still at work when I go home from club, and he is at work again before his neighbors are out of bed." This struck the rest, and we soon after had offers from one of them to supply us with stationery; but as yet we did not chuse to engage in shop business.

I mention this industry the more particularly and the more freely, *tho' it seems to be talking in my own praise* (my italics), that those of my posterity, who shall read it, may know the use of that virtue, when they see its effects in my favor throughout this relation. (BF, p. 61)

9 Joseph Breintnall (died 1746) was an influential American merchant and amateur naturalist who made high-quality nature prints of botanical specimens. After Franklin founded the first lending library, Breintnall became its first secretary. When Franklin founded the first constabulary of Philadelphia, he became the sheriff from 1735-1738. Breintnall also co-authored the thirty-two "Busy-Body" letters which were published in Bradford's newspaper *The American Weekly Mercury* in 1729 satirizing Samuel Keimer's plan to found his own paper.

4. Franklin, Editor and Owner of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (1728)

By 1729, Franklin was seriously planning to found his own newspaper because, as he explained, Bradford's newspaper, *American Weekly Mercury*, the only one in Pennsylvania, "was a paltry thing, wretchedly manag'd, no way entertaining, and yet was profitable for him."

Perhaps in a bid to enlist his help, Franklin confided his plan to his former co-worker, the "Oxford scholar," George Webb. However, the latter promptly divulged the secret to Keimer. Armed with this knowledge, Keimer decided to start his own paper in 1728 before Franklin could establish his own giving it the grandiose title the *Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences: and Pennsylvania Gazette*. In revenge, Franklin and his Junto friend, Joseph Breintnall, wrote a series of thirty-two entertaining articles in Bradford's paper under the title of "Busy-Body" which were published over a period of several months (cf. Franklin "Busy-Body Letters," February 4–September 25, 1729a). The result was that "the attention of the publick was fixed on that paper, and Keimer's proposals, which we burlesqu'd and ridicul'd, were disregarded" (BF, p. 62).

By this time Keimer, who had been losing money for nearly a year, offered to sell Franklin his paper, renamed the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, "for a trifle." Franklin "took it in hand directly, and it prov'd in a few years extremely profitable to me" (BF, p. 62). Within a decade it would become the most widely read newspaper in all of the colonies. Obviously, his principles about "doing good" did not extend to his former employer.

With Keimer out of the way, the next competitor to eliminate on Franklin's list was Bradford himself. By his own account, Franklin's paper had a better type which was far more agreeable to read and was superior to anything that had appeared before in the Province of Pennsylvania. On one particular occasion, it attracted the attention of the "*principal people*" regarding a piece he had written about a dispute between Governor Burnet and the Massachusetts Assembly. Thanks to this, in a short time, they were all subscribers of his newspaper.

Significantly, we see that this is also one of Franklin's first forays into the world of politics. "The *leading men*, seeing a newspaper now in the hands of one who could also handle a pen, thought it convenient to oblige and encourage me" (BF, p. 64). This is another instance of how his mastery of formal, standard written English, in addition to his many other talents, helped win the respect of his contemporaries regardless of their social status. The power Franklin now wielded to influence his readers was enormous.

In yet another criticism of Bradford's ineptitude, Franklin explains that

the latter had printed an address of the House of the governor “in a coarse, blundering manner” which he, on the other hand, reprinted “elegantly and correctly.” He then sent his version to every member of the Assembly. “They were sensible of the difference: it strengthened the hands of our friends in the House, and they voted us their printers for the year ensuing” (BF, p. 64).

Franklin adds that this resulted in his developing his friendship with a member of the House to the Governor named Mr. Hamilton who had returned to England and took a strong interest in Franklin from that time onward “continuing his patronage till his death.” Showing that the line between friendship and self-interest was very thin indeed, Franklin adds in a marginal note that “I got his son once £500.”

We see in this short passage how cold and calculating Franklin could be in business affairs, especially when he felt his opponents were beneath him in terms of professional competence. The following episode also demonstrates a certain degree of underhandedness which Franklin tries, rather unsuccessfully, to play down throughout his *Autobiography*.

Franklin had totally ignored his debt to Mr. Bradford who, the first day he arrived in Philadelphia, had welcomed him, fed him breakfast and introduced him to Mr. Keimer. It was the latter who offered him much needed work at a time when he was penniless and alone. Now he had no compunction whatsoever about ruining his former benefactor into the ground.

After a time, Franklin complained that his partner Hugh Meredith had gone back to drinking and was “no compositor, a poor pressman, and seldom sober.” As a result of his incompetence, Franklin felt he was saddled with all the responsibilities of their printing business. Furthermore, his friends in the Junto also criticized his association with Hugh. The embarrassment of seeing the latter drunk in the streets, and “playing at low games in alehouses,” signalled the end of their relationship. The *qu'en dira-t-on* spirit of Franklin's age prevailed and he sought the means to be rid of Meredith.

In addition, and this may be the real reason for the breakdown in their friendship, Mr. Meredith Sr. was unable to supply the additional £100 he had promised them. When the creditors demanded immediate repayment of the loan, Franklin and Meredith were faced with having to sell their press and types for half their worth as well as losing their entire business. It is at this point that two of his faithful friends, William Coleman and Robert Grace, stepped forward to pay off Franklin's debts. Meredith, distressed by the entire experience, came to Franklin and expressed his desire to return to farming, the occupation to which he had been bred.

Along with “many of our Welsh people,” he and his father left for North Carolina where land was cheap and plentiful. In exchange for breaking their partnership agreement, Franklin was now able to repay Mr. Meredith's initial

investment along with £30 to spare to be spent on a new saddle for Hugh.

In passing, Bernard Bailyn (1986a, 15) points out that Franklin had calculated that approximately 10,000 Pennsylvania families migrated to North Carolina, many into the hill country. How they got there is not stated. Many of these migrants moved on into the nearby Smoky Mountains in Tennessee and, as we shall see, the Pennsylvania koine certainly contributed in an important way to the variety of Appalachian English that was developing there (cf. Hall, 1942, cf. Chapters 11 and 15). This implies a considerable input of West Midlanders and Welshmen into hill country of North Carolina, whose speech contributed to local koine. The significance of this dialect melding will be seen in Part III (Chapters 16-24).

In 1729, at twenty-three years of age, he was now the sole owner of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. It was also around this time that Franklin had an affair with a woman whose identity he never disclosed, perhaps one of the women of "ill-repute" to whom he alludes to earlier in his *Autobiography* and whose company he had actively sought while in London. Towards the end of 1729 or perhaps in early 1730, she bore Franklin a son whom he named William. To his credit, he officially declared his paternity and committed himself to raising the child. It is probable that Franklin still had genuine affections for Deborah Read and, perhaps, she for him. Given their respective predicaments, the friendship between them was rekindled. However, as mentioned previously, her bigamist husband had fled the colony and, since there was no official proof of his death, no divorce papers could be drawn up. This prohibited the couple from entering into a formal marriage. From now on, Deborah would be his common-law wife and Benjamin's son William would be raised as their child.

Before moving on to the next section, I would like to offer the reader a glimpse into Franklin's personal feelings of admiration and affection for his wife that he confided in his friend, Dr. de Cabanis' (cf. Chapters 2 and 5). In this passage, he praises Deborah's great intelligence, wit and common sense.

It seems that it was around this time that Franklin became involved in an intimate union with his life partner. Their ages were not quite the same. Indeed, this excellent woman was a few years older than him. The wisdom of her character contributed greatly to the professional plans that her young friend followed with such zeal and constancy.

...In Franklin's opinion, a man is only complete when he has found a woman worthy of making him happy. Until then, his existence is imperfect, and he is only half of a whole, which cannot remain thus divided without great disadvantages. "Nature," he added, "always punishes us, through particular flaws and misfortunes, for a system that opposes it."

Franklin's printing business, his speculations on American newsprint and almanacs, his bookselling and stationery ventures, were almost as much the result of his wife's work as his own.... She was blessed with a quick mind that she

had sharpened through running a small business of another kind, but thanks to her advice and her insights, she had as much wit and tact as common sense and experience. "I always found," Franklin would often tell us, "that she knew what I did not know and if I misunderstood something, I was sure that it was precisely what she had understood." (De Cabanis, 1825, 233-234)¹⁰

4.1 Franklin: A Successful Businessman

Now that Franklin was the sole owner of his printing shop and in business for himself, his rise as a public figure was truly meteoric. In large part, his success was due not only to his vision, hard work and keen sense of business, but also to his merciless competitive streak which we have already observed. Thanks to these qualities, Franklin was already becoming a well-known personality in Philadelphia, and, thanks to his growing newspaper, his reputation steadily spread beyond Pennsylvania.

Around this period, there was an increasing demand on the part of the population for more paper money (cf. Franklin, April 3, 1729b). Franklin pointed out that there was only £15,000 worth of it in circulation in the entire Province of Pennsylvania. The wealthy Lord Proprietors, with whom he would clash for decades on other issues, were steadfastly opposed to printing paper money, fearing that this would cause the value of their own wealth to depreciate. Their fear was not unfounded because, this had indeed occurred in New England, the consequence being that the creditors (i.e. the richest inhabitants) had lost money by being forced to repay the debts that had been incurred.

The subject was discussed in the Junto and, as one might guess, he took the side of injecting more paper money into the economy. His argument was based on the fact that, when the first allotment of paper money was added in 1723, the consequence was a significant increase in business, employment and a considerable upsurge in the number of inhabitants. Of course, the reader has already guessed that there was another unspoken reason for his advocacy of

10 Author's translation: "Il paraît que c'est à peu près vers ce temps que la liaison de Franklin; avec la compagne de sa vie devint une union intime. Leur âge n'était pas tout-à-fait le même : cette femme excellente avait quelques années de plus; la sagesse de son caractère contribua beaucoup aux plans de conduite et de travail que son jeune ami suivait avec tant de zèle et de constance....Suivant son opinion, l'homme n'est complet que lorsqu'il s'est associé une femme digne de faire son bonheur: jusque-là son existence est imparfaite; ce n'est que la moitié d'un tout, qui ne peut rester ainsi divisé sans de grands désavantages. « La nature, ajoutait-il, nous punit toujours, par des défauts et des malheurs particuliers, d'un système qui la contrarie. » L'établissement d'imprimerie de Franklin; ses spéculations sur les papiers-nouvelles et les almanachs d'Amérique, ses entreprises de librairie et de papeterie, ont été presque autant l'ouvrage de sa femme que le sien propre... vité dont elle avait pris l'habitude dans un petit commerce d'un autre genre, mais aussi de ses conseils et de ses vues; elle avait autant d'esprit et de tact que de bon sens et d'expérience. « Je trouvais toujours, nous a dit souvent Franklin, qu'elle savait ce que je ne savais pas et si quelque chose m'avait échappé, j'étais sûr que c'était précisément ce qu'elle avait saisi»."

paper money: it was his own printing establishment that would print it and, if the Assembly voted in favour of the measure, he stood to make a small fortune.

In a pamphlet entitled *The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency* (April 1729), Franklin took advantage of his position as a printer and his talents as a writer to drive his point home. As it turned out, he claims, there were “no writers” among his detractors, to counter his arguments and, even if there had been, given that there were no other newspapers to express their point of view, one wonders who would have printed their opinions. The motion to print more paper money was presented before the House who voted in favour of the proposition. He makes two allusions about his ability to write. Notice also his reference to the support his proposal had by the common people.

It was well receiv'd by the common people in general; but the rich men dislik'd it, for it increase'd and strengthen'd the clamor for more money, *and they happening to have no writers* among them that were able to answer it, their opposition slacken'd, and the point was carried by a majority in the House. My friends there, who conceiv'd I had been of some service, thought fit to reward me by employing me in printing the money; a very profitable job and a great help to me. *This was another advantage gain'd by my being able to write* (my italics). (BF, p. 66)

Of course, although Franklin may have genuinely believed that the common people would reap the benefits of his actions, he was also undoubtedly aware of the potential profits this could bring for himself and his own business. This is one of many occasions where we observe Franklin's code of “doing good for others” (cf. Chapter 4) was also confused with his own personal financial interests. Thanks to his connections in the Junto, the number of his contracts increased and, likewise, so did his wealth:

I soon after obtain'd, thro' my friend Hamilton, the printing of the Newcastle paper money, another profitable jobb as I then thought it; *small things appearing great to those in small circumstances* (my italics); and these, to me, were really great advantages, as they were great encouragements. He procured for me, also, the printing of the laws and votes of that government, which continu'd in my hands as long as I follow'd the business. (BF, p. 66)

By 1730, Franklin became the Pennsylvania Assembly's official printer, a position which produced a steady flow of income. Not satisfied with his flourishing printing business, Franklin decided to open a stationer's shop. “I had it in blanks of all sorts, the correctest that ever appear'd among us, being assisted in that by my friend Breintnall. I had also paper, parchment, chapmen's books, etc.”

It was then that Franklin hired a compositor named Whitemash, along with an apprentice, the son of Aquila Rose, the deceased printer whom Franklin had eventually replaced (cf. Bradford the New York printer who had advised Franklin to go to Philadelphia in 1723). Franklin had first met Whitemash in London and

described him as “an excellent workman.” This provided him with considerable freedom to engage in his other philanthropic and scientific pursuits.

At this point, a somewhat irritating aspect of 18th-century social behaviour comes to the fore in Franklin’s *Autobiography*, namely, another public show of his industriousness and frugality in order to win the favour of the merchants and townspeople.

I began now gradually to pay off the debt I was under for the printing-house. In order to secure *my credit and character as a tradesman* (our italics), I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all appearances to the contrary. I drest plainly; I was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went out a fishing¹¹ or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauch’d me from my work, but that was seldom, snug, and gave no scandal; and, to show that I was not above my business,¹² I sometimes brought home the paper I purchas’d at the stores thro’ the streets on a wheelbarrow. *Thus being esteem’d an industrious, thriving young man, and paying duly for what I bought, the merchants who imported stationery solicited my custom; others proposed supplying me with books, and I went on swimmingly.*

The vindictive, hard-hearted side of Franklin’s character emerges in the following in this last statement about Keimer’s fate.

In the mean time, Keimer’s credit and business declining daily, he was at last forc’d to sell his printing-house to satisfy his creditors. He went to Barbadoes, and there lived some years in very poor circumstances. (BF, p. 66)

4.2 A Lesson in Business Sense

At this point in his *Autobiography*, Franklin’s vindictiveness resurfaces as he obviously delights in having brought about Keimer’s downfall and exile. As mentioned previously, many of the anecdotes in his *Autobiography* are framed to convey lessons in moral instruction for his son William but, after their falling out, the objective of the second part of his *Autobiography* was to offer helpful life lessons for young people more generally.

As an example of good entrepreneurial advice, for instance, Franklin discusses the case of David Harry (cf. 3.1) who had served as Keimer’s apprentice and whom Franklin had trained when he worked there. Harry, by this time, had become a highly-skilled workman and, having the support of a number of wealthy benefactors, decided to set himself up in business. Franklin makes no secret that he feared his competence and competition from him saying “I was at first apprehensive of a powerful rival in Harry, as his friends were very able” (BF, p. 66).

11 One of the rare examples of a-prefixing in Franklin’s written English, another southern and Midland England feature.

12 The occupation of a printer was not particularly respected in society. It is therefore significant that Franklin continued to sign his name as Benjamin Franklin, printer (cf. his epitaph).

Franklin then proposed to Harry that, rather than confront one another as competitors, the two should form a partnership. Franklin explains what happened next. In short, he presents Harry's attitude and behaviour as a moral lesson on how *not* to behave in 18th-century Philadelphia. His first mistake was to reject Franklin's offer "with scorn."

He was very proud, dress'd like a gentleman, liv'd expensively, took much diversion and pleasure abroad, ran in debt, and neglected his business; upon which, all business left him; and, finding nothing to do, he followed Keimer to Barbadoes, taking the printing-house with him. There this apprentice employ'd his former master as a journeyman; they quarrel'd often; Harry went continually behindhand, and at length was forc'd to sell his types and return to his country to work in Pensilvania. The person that bought them employ'd Keimer to use them, but in a few years he died. (BF, p. 67)

One need only compare this passage with his account of his own work ethic, which he presents as exemplary. With Harry gone, Franklin's sole competitor at this point was Bradford who, by this time, was aging. Nevertheless, he was wealthy and, as such, was not particularly interested in pursuing further business dealings. We are informed that Bradford's newspaper was generally thought to be a "better distributor of advertisements" than Franklin's and the lack of advertising in Franklin's paper was disadvantageous to him.

One of the reasons for Bradford's advantage in this domain was his position as the Philadelphia Post Office Master (1728-1737).¹³ His business clients, believing that they could get quicker delivery of the latest news, preferred his business to Franklin's. At this time, of course, the post was delivered on horseback and Franklin openly admits that he bribed the riders to deliver his own papers too. When Bradford discovered this he was "unkind enough to forbid it which occasion'd some resentment on my part; and I thought so meanly of him for it, that, when I afterward came into his situation, I took care never to imitate it" (BF, p. 67).

4.3 Franklin, Deputy Postmaster General

From this point on, his eyes were set on controlling the postal service in Philadelphia and, in 1737, Colonel Spotswood, the governor of Virginia, who was the Postmaster General in the colonies, informed Franklin of his dissatisfaction with Andrew Bradford, his deputy in Philadelphia and offered the post to Franklin. One can assume that, given his ability to ingratiate himself to influential and powerful men, Spotswood's decision was taken as a result of meticulous political manoeuvring on Franklin's part. He naturally accepted the post which he says was "of great advantage" to him, a leitmotif throughout his *Autobiography*:

13 The Post Office was conveniently located in his own house!

...for, tho' the salary was small, it facilitated the correspondence that improv'd my newspaper; increas'd the number demanded as well as the advertisements to be inserted, so that it came to afford me a considerable income. My old competitor's newspaper declin'd proportionably, and I was satisfy'd with retaliating his refusal, while postmaster, to permit my papers being carried by the riders. Thus he suffer'd greatly from his neglect in due accounting; and I mention it as a lesson to those young men who may be employ'd in managing affairs for others, that they should always render accounts, and make remittances, with great clearness and punctuality. The character of observing such a conduct is the most powerful of all recommendations to new employments and increase of business. (BF, pp. 102-103).

Having attained his objective, Franklin once again shows no hint of compassion for his competitor whose business he ruthlessly destroys. Having said this, as he becomes increasingly wealthy, Franklin decides to promote several of his most diligent and talented workmen by establishing them in the printing-houses in several different colonies.

The partnership at Carolina having succeeded, I was encourage'd to engage in others, and to promote several of my workmen, who had behaved well, by establishing them with printing-houses in different colonies, on the same terms with that in Carolina.

Most of them did well, being enabled at the end of our term, six years, to purchase the types of me and go on working for themselves, by which means several families were raised. Partnerships often finish in quarrels; but I was happy in this, that mine were all carried on and ended amicably, owing, I think, a good deal to the precaution of having very explicitly settled, in our articles, everything to be done by or expected from each partner, so that there was nothing to dispute, which precaution I would therefore recommend to all who enter into partnerships; for, whatever esteem partners may have for, and confidence in each other at the time of the contract, little jealousies and disgusts may arise, with ideas of inequality in the care and burden of the business, etc., which are attended often with breach of friendship and of the connection, perhaps with lawsuits and other disagreeable consequences. (BF, p. 109)

Still in his twenties, Franklin was now not only the owner of the most popular newspaper in America, but also at the head of the postal service which meant he now controlled a "colony-wide" network to deliver his papers.

4.4 Franklin, a Man of Wealth and Standing (1730-1748)

With all his business experience and political connections, and the fact that his newspaper was now "the only one in this and the neighboring provinces," Franklin's financial situation flourished exponentially. As he put it, "after getting the first hundred pound, it is more easy to get the second, money itself being of a prolific nature" (BF, p. 108).

From a period stretching from 1730 to 1748, Franklin was progressively

less involved in the daily management of his newspaper, the responsibility of which he placed in the hands of talented young printers. This left him more and more time to devote to the study of natural philosophy and the application of the moral principles outlined in his *Art of Virtue* (November 1728), namely, accomplishing a wide range of projects intended to better the lives of his fellow-citizens (cf. Chapter 4).

It is during the eighteen-year period from 1750 to 1768 that he achieved many of his most noteworthy accomplishments, one of which was his spelling reform and the details of which we will explore in Chapters 25-27. In 1748, he hired a newly-arrived printer from London named David Hall and was so impressed by the excellent quality of his work that he decided to form a partnership with him. From this point on Franklin progressively left the responsibility of running the printing shop to Hall and concentrated his activities on intellectual and philanthropic pursuits.

With the beginning of the King George's War (1744-1748) and the future French and Indian Wars (1756-1763) looming on the horizon, much of Franklin's energy was now diverted to public service, in particular the physical defence of the most vulnerable people on the frontier for whom he was to become the principal spokesman and defender. Chapters 6 through 9 will be devoted to his activities during this tumultuous period of his life as well as to the unexpected consequences of the wars with France, which created conditions leading to the schism between the North American Colonies and the motherland.

As I shall attempt to demonstrate, despite his soaring ambitions, his merciless competitive streak and his character flaws, many of which he was well aware himself, all of his actions in the public and political sphere, in addition to his many philanthropic achievements, were coherent in the sense that his activities were devoted to defending the interests of the most defenceless and bettering the human condition. This is the topic to which we shall now turn in Chapter 4.

4. “O powerful Goodness!”

Introduction

At a time when most Western nations are in the final stages de-Christianization, devoting an entire chapter to Franklin’s religious and philosophical beliefs may appear irrelevant to some and perhaps even annoying for others. Nevertheless, I am convinced that without a clear understanding of the metaphysical principles that guided Franklin through his long life, one cannot understand either his philanthropic contributions or the ethical foundations behind his life-long commitment to ensuring the intellectual and political sovereignty of the people, one of his primary goals being to impose limitations on the autocratic powers of the monarchy. The sources of his philanthropic and political engagement are inseparably linked and have a common origin.

In the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3, a number of human weaknesses were made apparent. Having said this, Franklin was always forthcoming about his own shortcomings and occasionally even poked fun at his own failings. The thread that unifies his life’s achievements, whether political, scientific or social, is his firm commitment to improving the lives and defending the interests of those he saw as being less fortunate. This goal, as we shall see, was intended not only to please the “Supreme Being” but also to obtain His blessing for all his undertakings and, at the end of his days, earn him an agreeable place in heaven. Far from being a peripheral consideration, it is at the heart of all his altruistic endeavours including his RMS (cf. Chapter 5 and Part IV). This can also be understood as an integral part of his dissident heritage. In this light, the conception of his plan for a *Reformed Mode of Spelling* is thus merely one very minor, unfinished endeavour among many others that were designed to ease the burdens of humanity.

The focus in this chapter is thus more specifically Franklin’s disavowal of the traditional Protestant denominations, including his own, and how this led him to conceive a personal metaphysical code of conduct that served as a moral guide throughout his entire lifetime.

1. Franklin's Dissenting Religious Inheritance (1714-1717)

In Chapter 2, I briefly alluded to the ways the Presbyterian brand of Christianity influenced and conditioned Franklin's early life. We also discussed his disenchantment with the family's faith after having read his father's books on polemic divinity. I also quoted Franklin as having written that he did not recall a time in his life when he could not read. In order to better understand the ways in which his religious upbringing and training (despite his rejection of the formal expressions of it) was central to Franklin's education and his ethnical code, I would like to take a step back to present some additional sociohistorical and sociocultural background about religion and education in early 18th-century colonial Boston.

We saw in Chapter 2 that the settlers in Puritan Massachusetts were initially selected by commissions whose role it was to determine the ability of prospective settlers to contribute to the foundation of the "New Jerusalem," a theocratic government based solely on Biblical principles. In order to accomplish this goal, it was the duty of all Christian men and women to read scripture. Literacy was thus the centrepiece of the faith and, for that reason, far more widespread in the Massachusetts Bay Colony than any other North American colony or in Great Britain itself.

Reading and interpreting scripture, it was believed, would permit each Christian to internalize the word of God and prepare the way for his or her own salvation. The earliest public law for this purpose was the Massachusetts School Law, passed in 1642.

This Court, taking into consideration *the great neglect of many parents & masters in training up their children in learning & labor* (my italics), & other implyments which may be proffitable to the common wealth, do hereupon order and decree, that in euery towne ye chosen men appointed for managing the prudentiall affaires of the same shall henceforth stand charged with the care of the redresse of this evill, so as they shalbee sufficiently punished by fines for the neglect thereof, upon presentment of the grand iury, or other information or complaint in any Court within this iurisdiction; and for this end they, or the greater number of them, *shall have power to take account from time to time of all parents and masters, and of their children, concerning their calling and impliment of their children, especially of their ability to read & understand the principles of religion & the capitall lawes of this country*, and to impose fines upon such as shall refuse to render such accounts to them when they shall be required; and they shall have power, with consent of any Court or the magistrate, to put forth apprentices the children of such as they shall (find) not to be able & fitt to employ and bring them up. (Shurtleff, 1853, 9)

It is generally considered to be the cornerstone of public education in America and merits being fully quoted:

Forasmuch as the good education of children is of singular behoof and benefit to any Common-wealth; and whereas many parents & masters are too indulgent and negligent of their duty in that kind. It is therefore ordered that the Select men of every town, in the severall precincts and quarters where they dwell, shall have a vigilant eye over their brethren & neighbours, to see, first that none of them shall suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as not to indeavour to teach by themselves or others, their children & apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, & knowledge of the Capital Lawes: upon penaltie of twentie shillings for each neglect therin. Also that all masters of families do once a week (at the least) catechize their children and servants in the grounds & principles of Religion, & if any be unable to do so much: that then at the least they procure such children or apprentices to learn some short orthodox catechism without book, that they may be able to answer unto the questions that shall be propounded to them out of such catechism by their parents or masters or any of the Select men when they shall call them to a tryall of what they have learned of this kind. And further that all parents and masters do breed & bring up their children & apprentices in some honest lawful calling, labour or employment, either in husbandry, or some other trade profitable for themselves, and the Common-wealth if they will not or cannot train them up in learning to fit them for higher employments... (Parish, 1855, 475)

NB: note the spelling of *Cort* [kɔɹt], for “court” (cf. Chapter 21 and Chapter 22), *implyments* [ɪmˈplɛɪmənts ~ ɪmˈpləɪmənts] for “employments” and *indeavour* [ɪnˈdɛvəɹ] here (cf. Chapter 16). These examples, and hundreds of others like it, reveal the local vernacular 17th-century pronunciations as it was spoken in the early Massachusetts settlements that provide priceless information regarding the pronunciations of the settlers. Their speech habits contributed to forming the Boston koine that Franklin spoke as a youth. The theoretical and methodological significance of this will be presented and discussed in Parts II and III.

Initially, this law implied that the children would be taught at home by literate members of each household. Of great significance is the goal of teaching apprentices and servants of either sex “so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, & knowledge of the Capital Lawes.” Perfectly reading the English tongue here means mastering the ecclesiastical standard of the Bible, that is, the Geneva Bible which, as we have seen, was Oliver Cromwell’s personal choice for his Puritan followers. Franklin himself appears to have favoured the King James Bible (1611) and even proposed a modern translation of it, which he considered too archaic even during his lifetime. Note that by 1782, he had totally rejected the use of “thou,” even though it continued to be used across Great Britain in paritary varieties until a decade or so ago.

Part of the First Chapter of Job Modernized.

7 And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

7 And God said to Satan, You have been some time absent; where *was* you?¹ And Satan answered, I have been at my country-seat, and in different places visiting my friends (Franklin 1782b).

In 1647, another law was passed which was influenced by German and Dutch precedent rather than English tradition. This required the building of schools. During Franklin's lifetime, Massachusetts possessed elementary schools for all its children and secondary schools in all the larger towns.

For this reason, the early foundations of universal education in the Massachusetts colony explain why New England is often viewed as the source of most of the country's educational innovations between the 17th and the 19th centuries. Their zeal and respect for education had a very functional purpose: to serve as a "bulwark of Church and State."

It is in this historical context which Franklin's educational background must be viewed. Likewise, the importance of each Christian's service to his community and to its "Common-wealth" (i.e. the well-being of all) was also a foundation of Puritan doctrine, a notion that Franklin took on board at a very early age and which profoundly motivated his distinctive religious views throughout his lifetime.

Franklin wrote that, as a child and young adolescent (1716-1719), he had avidly read all the books in his father's small library.

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the Pilgrim's Progress, my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's Historical Collections; they were small chapmen's books, and cheap, 40 or 50 in all. (BF, p. 14)

As stated in Chapter 2, this passage illustrates that of all the books he read, it was Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good* that was perhaps the most instrumental in encouraging him to undertake not only his many philanthropic activities (cf. Chapter 5) but also his political engagement to defend the rights of the less fortunate.

My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way since it was now

1 Note the distinction Franklin makes between "You was" (for thou wast) and "You were" (for ye were(n)). The distinction between "You was" and "you were" was still common in places like Yorkshire until the late 20th century.

resolved I should not be a clergyman. Plutarch's Lives there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of De Foe's, called an Essay on Projects, and another of *Dr. Mather's, called Essays to do Good, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life* (my italics) (ibid.).

We learn that Franklin regrets not having had access to books of a secular nature but, lacking anything else to read, he had read nearly all his father's books on "polemic divinity" which focused on the defence of Presbyterian theology and the rejection and condemnation of the precepts of Deism and Catholicism. Franklin admits in his *Autobiography* that he found the arguments in favour of Deism far more convincing than the counterarguments advanced by his own church and here, it must be said, this fact alone demonstrates his independence of mind and religious conscience. This should not come as a surprise, however, especially at a time when the quest for "truth" and the understanding of "God's word" was the central religious preoccupation of most of the faithful.

His early doubts about the nature of God's role in the world and, more importantly, about the divinity of Jesus, made him the object of much scorn in the town of Boston where he came to be viewed as "an infidel or atheist" (BF, p. 22). It must also be said that Franklin's self-described inclination for challenging authority, and lampooning and satirizing those with whom he disagreed, was the result of his early exposure to openly polemical discussions on metaphysical topics. This was not limited to Franklin's family and it played an important role in shaping the minds of New Englanders in his day. Critical discussions such as these were commonplace in sermons and in public and private discussions, often at the supper table, in which Franklin says his father loved to engage with knowledgeable friends. We shall see that another Presbyterian, the Newcastle orthoepist, Thomas Spence, shares much in common with Franklin in terms of his politics, views on education and the way a new phonetic alphabet would be of benefit to the least fortunate. Both of their fathers encouraged them to indulge in open discussions about concepts and principles during their childhoods (cf. Chapter 14).

1.1 Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good*

Franklin points out in the last line of passage cited above that Reverend Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good* (Mather 1663-1728) were particularly instrumental in shaping the course of his life. As hard as it is to imagine in our day and age, and despite Franklin's own moral shortcomings, I am convinced that the "doing of good" became the cornerstone of all his public undertakings throughout his life, his incentive to reform English orthography (cf. Chapters 25-27) being only one of many altruistic projects. This is proven by the fact that, towards the end

of his life, in correspondence with Samuel Mather, Cotton Mather's son, Franklin repeats this claim:

When I was a Boy, I met with a Book intitl'd *Essays to do Good* (*Bonfacious Essay to do good*), which I think was written by your Father. It had been so little regarded by a former Possessor, that several Leaves of it were torn out: But the Remainder gave me such a Turn of Thinking as to have an Influence on my Conduct thro' Life; for I have always set a greater Value on the Character of a Doer of Good, than on any other kind of Reputation; and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful Citizen, the Publick owes the Advantage of it to that Book (my italics). (Franklin to Samuel Mather, May 12, 1784)

In this letter, Franklin mentions that he knew both Samuel's father, Cotton Mather, but also his grandfather, Increase Mather, and heard of them preach and had even visited Cotton Mather upon his return from Philadelphia to obtain his father's support for Governor Keith and Colonel French's plan to set him up in business. In the following passage, we see the intimate nature of relations Franklin entertained with such influential churchmen.

You mention your being in your seventy-eighth year; I am in my seventy-ninth; we are grown old together. It is now more than sixty years since I left Boston, but I remember well both your father and grandfather, having heard them both in the pulpit, and seen them in their houses. The last time I saw your father was in the beginning of 1724, when I visited him after my first trip to Pennsylvania. He received me in his library, and on my taking leave showed me a shorter way out of the house, through a narrow passage, which was crossed by a beam overhead. We were all talking as I withdrew, he accompanying me behind, and I turning partly towards him, when he said hastily, "Stoop, stoop!" I did not understand him till I felt my head hit against the beam. He was a man that never missed any occasion of giving instruction, and upon this he said to me: "You are young, and have the world before you; stoop as you go through it, and you will miss many hard thumps." This advice, thus beat into my head, has frequently been of use to me, and I often think of it when I see pride mortified and misfortunes brought upon people by their carrying their heads too high. (Franklin to Samuel Mather, May 12, 1784)

The full title of the book he refers to here is the *Bonifacious, or Essay to do Good* which Cotton Mather wrote in 1710. The introduction to the book outlines the general principles of its contents well:

An "Essay upon the Good that is to be devised and "designed, by those who desire to answer the "Great End of Life, and to *Do Good* while they "live. A Book offered, First, in general, unto "all Christians, in a Personal Capacity, or in a "Relative: Then more particularly, Unto Magistrates-Ministers-Physicians-Lawyers "Schoolmasters-Gentlemen--Officers--Churches, "and unto all Societies of a religious character "and intention: with humble Proposals of unexceptionable methods to Do Good in the world."

What is striking here is the focus on not only man's mission in the world as an individual endeavour, but more importantly, to contribute to bettering the lives of all those in one's community as well as the Commonwealth more generally.

Paradoxically, Franklin must have been aware of Mather's role as a judge in condemning nineteen people to hang during the Salem witch trials of 1692. Franklin's maternal aunt, Bethshua Folger Pope (Abiah Folger's sister), also participated as a witness during these trials. During the interrogations she was described as having been stricken with "hysterical blindness" and convulsions while giving her testimony. Her allegations are said to have resulted in the hanging of a certain Martha Corey. An extract from the trial records gives an idea of the cultural setting:

Mrs. Pope [i.e. Bethshua] accused Martha Corey, as well as Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor, of inflicting pain upon her body through witchcraft. At the trial of Martha Corey in March 1693, she joined with other afflicted women in calling Martha "a gospel witch."

The following month Rebecca Nurse was arrested and tried. During the examination, several afflicted persons reported seeing "a black man" whispering in Nurse's ear. The judge stated, "What a sad thing it is that a church member here and now... should be thus accused and charged." At which point, "Mrs. Pope fell into a grievous fit and cried out 'a sad thing sure enough'; And then many more fell into lamentable fits." (Smoller, 1995, 1)

This gives a sense of the more extreme expressions of religious fanaticism often associated with the Puritan sect now embedded in the popular consciousness. Later, however, the judges who took part in the trials recanted and publicly asked for forgiveness before their congregations. Cotton Mather was less forthcoming, however. Nevertheless, it is hard to know whether Franklin believed in the existence of the devil or concepts such as "evil" or the existence of a "hell." He certainly believed in the afterlife and, perhaps in "heaven," however. I have found no sources where he discusses these matters or gives his opinion about these trials.

There are other instances in which Franklin remains on good terms with men who would be judged as war criminals today, such as Governor Morris of Pennsylvania who, in 1756 instituted "scalp bounties," that is, payment for the taking of scalps of Native Americans over twelve years of age who were allied to the French. French scalps were worth more! Of course, the French adopted the same practice with an English officer's scalp being worth 5 pounds.

Despite these morbid revelations, there can be no doubt that Mather's influence on Franklin was a motivating source for his many philanthropic projects. It is thus fitting that I should outline these principles and see how they are integrated into Franklin's own *Art of Virtue*, a work which Benjamin Vaughan, the London editor of Franklin's philosophical and scientific writings

(1779), lauded with such enthusiasm. Franklin even included Vaughan's letter of praise in his *Autobiography*.

One of the fundamental Puritans'/Dissenters' ideas was that a Christian theocracy would lead to a more perfect "Commonwealth" composed of educated, moral citizens who would enrich society through their own good works. Such a nation of Godly people would thus fulfil his will on earth, hence the necessity to "purge" it of any demonic or evil elements. Mather starts his essay emphasizing the sufferings of humanity and the necessity to find practical measures to relieve human suffering: "There needs abundance to be done that the miseries of the world may have adequate remedies provided for them; and that the miserable be relieved and comforted" (Mather, 1825, 50; henceforth CM).

The essay continues with constant references to the necessity of "doing good," since God is himself the personification of "goodness" (cf. Plotinus, Chapter 1), a concept which Franklin takes on board and repeats incessantly in all his writings. In his eyes, the best thing that a Christian can do to please Providence is thus to perform acts of goodness to relieve the burden of suffering and affliction of his fellow men and women. As we shall see, Franklin interpreted this message very literally, to the extent that he came to exclude many other messages of his own church as superfluous, unnecessary or even counterproductive.

Franklin rarely stated his personal religious beliefs in his correspondence, but did so on occasion in his *Autobiography*. The influence of Enlightenment ideas, his study of natural philosophy and his forays into Deism all contributed to a highly original metaphysical interpretation of God's nature. The result was a fusion of these philosophies and Christian principles as outlined by Mather in his *Essay to Do Good*. The following extracts offer a clear idea of the concepts that made the most profound impression on the young Franklin and which he felt was lacking in the Presbyterian Church. One need only review the prayers he imagined in his *Art of Virtue* (cf. below) to see the degree to which this text impressed him. The reader will recognize many thoughts outlined here in Franklin's philanthropic undertakings, including his spelling reform.

Let no man pretend to be a Christian who does not approve of *a perpetual endeavour to do good in the world* (my italics).² What pretension can such a man have to be a follower of *the Good One*? (CM, p. 51)

He is an excellent, a virtuous, a laudable thing to be full of devices, to bring about such noble purposes. (CM, p. 50)

Franklin's search for the true identity of God and religious truth brought him to adopt a universal view of religion which was to consider that men of all the

2 All italicized passages in the citations of Cotton Mather's essay are mine and are in reference to doing good.

religions of the world shared similar basic moral codes (cf. Walter, 1999). Even the strictest of Puritans such as Mather seemed to share something of this belief.

Yea, the man must be much a stranger to history, who has not made the remark: "To speak truth, and *to do good*, were, in the esteem even of the heathen world, most godlike qualities." (CM, p. 52)

God rewards those who do good, a belief Franklin clearly shares (cf. his letter to Rev. Ezra Stiles below):

I will but yet propose the reward if *well-doing*, and the glorious things which the mercy and truth of God will do for those who *devise good*; because I would have to do with such as will esteem it a sufficient reward in itself. I will conceive that my readers possess that generous ingenuity which will dispose them to count themselves well rewarded in the thing itself, if God will permit them to *do good* in the world. It is an invaluable honour *to do good*; it is an incomparable pleasure. A man must look upon himself as dignified and gratified by God, when an opportunity *to do good* is put in his hands (CM, pp. 52-53)...

We can do more than we do. If not...He is dead while he lives. (CM, p. 54)

Mather's following point is an aspect of Franklin's belief system which he appears to have rejected, at least in the literal sense:

Christians must ... "Resign themselves up to the Holy Spirit, that he may possess them, instruct them, strengthen them and, for his name's sake, lead them in the paths of holiness. The first-born of all devices *to do Good* is in being born again." (CM, p. 56)

Lord, *how little good have I done* to what I might have done! Let the sense of this cause us to loathe and judge ourselves before the Lord. (CM, p. 56)

Here we see the critical self-interrogation so typical of Franklin in his *Art of Virtue*:

...What may be done for God – for Christ – for my own soul; and for other most important interests? How may I become a blessing to the world? And what may I do, that righteousness may dwell in this world? (CM, pp. 57-58)

His design is not only to represent the prudence, but also the industry, the ingenuity, the resolution, and the heroic effort of the soul, necessary in those who would seek, and serve the Kingdom of God. (CM, pp. 60-61)

Even ordinary men can improve the world they live in by good acts, a belief Franklin clearly holds when he founds the various institutions such as the Junto...:

Encourage simple men to do good... Many a man seems to reckon himself destitute of these talents... Alas, poor man, what can he do? My friend, think again; think often: you will certainly find them to be more than you were aware of. (CM, p. 69)

A mean mechanic – who can tell *what an engine of good he may become*, if humbly and wisely applied to it. (CM, p. 70)

As we shall see in Franklin's *Art of Virtue*, another of Mather's suggestions is adopted in a very literal way by devising a written code of virtues to be adhered to:

Consider till you have resolved something. Write down the resolutions you make. Examine what precept and what promise you can find in the word of God to countenance your intentions review these memorials in proper seasons, to see how far you have proceeded in the examination of them. The advantages of these preserved and revised memorials, no rhetoric will be sufficient to commend them, no arithmetic to number them. (CM, p. 70)

Franklin also openly believes that practical good actions would bring the doer of good works "recompense" on earth or in heaven (cf. his letter to Rev. Ezra Stiles, a month before his death).

The gracious and faithful providence of *God grants this recompense to his diligent servants*, that *he will multiply their opportunities to be serviceable*. And when *ingenious men have a little used themselves to contrivances*, in this or that way of pursuing the best Intentions, their Ingenuity will sensibly improve, and there will be more of Exquisiteness, more of Expansion in their Diffusive Applications. Among all the Dispensations of a Special Providence in the Government of the world, there is none more Uninterrupted than the Accomplishment of that Word "Vnto him that hath, shall be given." ... I will say this, "*O Useful Man! Take for thy motto – HABENTI DABITURA* (To him that hath shall be given);" And, in a Lively use of *thy Opportunities to Do Good*, see how notably it will be accomplished; see what will be accomplished! See what Accomplishment of that Word will last Surprise you. "Tho' thy Beginning be Small, yet thy Latter end shall greatly Increase." (CM, pp. 71-72)

Again, Franklin firmly believes, that "good works" will grant him the blessing of God on earth and a place in heaven in the afterlife.

1.2 Wisdom, Self-Interrogation and Self-Improvement

The following passages appear to have greatly aided Franklin in coming to terms with the sense of remorse he expresses about the excesses and moral transgressions that his deist faith had allowed and the negative impact it had on his character and subsequent behaviour.

First *let every man devise what good may be done for the correction of what is yet amiss, in his own heart and life*. (p. 72)

Frequent *self-examination is the duty and prudence of all who would know themselves or would not lose themselves*. (CM, p. 73)

The great intention of *self-examination* is to find out the points wherein we are to "*amend our ways.*" One article and exercise in our meditation should be to find out the things wherein the truth upon which we have been meditating may be attempted. *If we could be good men*, we must often *devise how we may grow in knowledge and in all goodness*. Such an inquiry should often be made; what shall I do, that what is yet lacking the image of God upon me, may be perfected? What shall I do that I may love more perfectly, more watchfully, more fruitfully before the glorious, Lord?

O! how much would it *regulate our lives*; how watchfully, how fruitfully would it cause us to live: *what incredible number of good works would it produce in the world!* (CM, pp. 74-75)

Franklin not only studied all of the points elucidated here but he did his best to integrate these and other principles into a carefully crafted scheme known as the *Art of Virtue* (1726) and his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion* (1728) for living a full, moral, productive life while dedicating himself to the service of others, in his mind, particularly to those of his social class and condition. His personal religious beliefs resemble a fusion of some visions inherited from his Puritan religious instruction and aspects of his deist beliefs which he never completely rejected.

2. Deism and Science

As we saw above, it was after reading his father's books on polemic divinity that he rejected many of the teachings of the Presbyterian Church:

But I was scarce fifteen, when, after doubting by turns of several points, as I found them disputed in the different books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation itself. Some books against Deism fell into my hands; they were said to be the substance of sermons preached at Boyle's Lectures. It happened that they wrought an effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them; for the arguments of the deists, which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutations; in short, I soon became a thorough Deist. (BF, p. 57)

In Kerry Walter's enlightening article on Franklin's sense of religion, he defines Deism as follows:

Eighteenth-century deists accepted the existence of an impersonal deity who created a universe defined by uniform natural laws, but who in no way subsequently interfered in the operations of the natural order. Miraculous interventions were rejected by deists as contrary to the divine intention and the natural order. Moreover, the deity who created a universe governed by predictable and orderly natural laws also created rational humans capable of understanding and manipulating them. Thus, humans needed no "sacred" text to comprehend God or reality. A rational investigation of the natural order was sufficient. Finally, deists insisted that ritualistic worship was both unnecessary and conducive to

superstition. For them the most appropriate way to honor the deity was through the exercise of reason and the practice of virtue. (Walters, 1999, 92-93)

Franklin's change of heart regarding Deism came after the publication of his "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain" while at Palmer's in London, and the highly negative reactions to it:

In this piece it was my design to explain and enforce this doctrine, that vicious actions are not hurtful because they are forbidden, but forbidden because they are hurtful, the nature of man alone considered; that it was, therefore, every one's interest to be virtuous who wish'd to be happy even in this world; and I should, from this circumstance (there being always in the world a number of rich merchants, nobility, states, and princes, who have need of honest instruments for the management of their affairs, and such being so rare), have endeavored to convince young persons that no qualities were so likely to make a poor man's fortune as those of probity and integrity. (cited in Walter, 1999, 91)

Franklin writes that "My London pamphlet," which I understand to be an allusion to his essay entitled "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain" (a response to Wollaston's *Religion of Nature*), Franklin had cited the following lines of John Dryden. Note once again the allusion to the Great Chain of Being:

Whatever is, is right. *Though purblind man
Sees but a part o' the chain, the nearest link* (my italics)
His eyes not carrying to the equal beam,
That poises all above;
and from the attributes of God, his infinite wisdom, goodness and power, concluded that nothing could possibly be wrong in the world, and that vice and virtue were empty distinctions, no such things existing..." (BF, p. 57)

After coming to realize the flaws in his thinking, he actively sought to destroy all the copies of this pamphlet shortly after his publication.

Nevertheless, the idea that "nothing could be wrong in the world" is a theme which Voltaire treated with considerable irony in *Candide* (1759): *Tout est au mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles* ("All is well in the best of all possible worlds"). We shall see that Franklin and Voltaire became fast friends, and it was Franklin who initiated Voltaire into the Masons.

By the end of his stay in London, Franklin had come to realize that the deist principles he had defended in his essay

appear'd now not so clever a performance as I once thought it; and I doubted whether some error had not insinuated itself unperceiv'd into my argument, so as to infect all that follow'd, as is common in metaphysical reasonings. (BF, pp. 57-58)

Although Deists placed great stock in what they called "virtue," Franklin came to realize, little by little, and especially with Mr. Denham's passing and his own

near death from pleurisy, that Christian morality did indeed play a crucial and beneficial role in society. Interestingly, although he clearly did not reject the concepts of Deism entirely, he realized that this belief system was impractical because of the potential troubles it caused him and others. "I began to suspect that this doctrine, tho' it might be true, was not very useful" (BF, pp. 57-58).

Franklin further confesses that converting his friends to Deism had been a serious error. In the first case, John Collins had become an obnoxious drunkard, had borrowed money from Franklin without ever repaying him. His best friend James Ralph, who had followed him to London, had abandoned his wife and child in Pennsylvania and, as soon as he had arrived in London, had taken up with a woman with a child and lived out of wedlock. Franklin himself admits he tried, unsuccessfully, to seduce James Ralph's girlfriend, an act which, when it reached Ralph's ears, ended their friendship. He also writes of Governor Keith, "another freethinker" who had blatantly lied to him about setting him up in business as a printer and sent him to London without any intention of fulfilling his promises of financial assistance.

As stated previously, although Franklin does not overtly state it, he makes not-so-veiled allusions to his visits to brothels of London and Philadelphia. Indeed, as we have seen, his own son William was born of such an illicit union. In his *Autobiography* Franklin says himself that during his stay in England he was "without religion."

Among his errata, he also acknowledged his own misdeeds, in particular, with regard to his brother-in-law, Vernon, from whom he had borrowed money without repaying his debt. Among these was the forgotten promise of marriage to Miss Read. Had Franklin written to her and committed himself to her, she would never have entered into a disastrous union with a bigamist and she would not have been constrained to accept her status as a common-law wife.

3. Franklin's *Art of Virtue* (1726)

Upon his return to Philadelphia which was followed by the death of Mr. Denham, whom he viewed as second father, compounded with his own near-death experience, Franklin was shocked into reconsidering some of his religious principles. At the age of twenty, Franklin felt a keen need to restructure his life and, to accomplish this task, he set about founding what amounts to a personal religious philosophy. Just as Franklin believed that the natural laws of the universe were regulated according to a perfectly ordered and minutely calibrated supernatural design, he must have believed that the life of a human being must also be structured in ways which were in harmony with these metaphysical laws. In essence, after the excesses and self-professed "lack of religion" during his stay in London, the point of his pamphlet was to restore order and discipline

to his life in a way that he believed would be pleasing to God.

We have just seen above a number of ethical lessons that Cotton Mather outlines in his essay which seem to have served as a foundation for Franklin's personal religious views. In this sense, his *Art of Virtue* seems to be a very literal response to the Mather's call to "Consider till you have resolved something. Write down the resolutions you make. Examine what precept and what promise you can find in the word of God to countenance your intentions" (CM, p. 70).

Yet, Franklin was unhappy with what he described as the conservatism and stodginess of the various Protestant denominations, not to mention Roman Catholicism and other of the world's religions and, above all, their general inability to improve the lives of human beings in practical ways. Franklin is particularly forthright in expressing his discontent with his own Presbyterian ministers, at one point even expressing his disgust. His criticism of one of the preachers of his Church goes for most others when he complains that

...his [Franklin's minister's] discourses were chiefly either polemic arguments, or explications of the peculiar doctrines of our sect, and were all to me very dry, uninteresting, and unedifying, since *not a single moral principle was inculcated or enforc'd, their aim seeming to be rather to make us Presbyterians than good citizens* (my italics). (BF, p. 81)

For this reason, he took it upon himself to design his own moral code which he believed would serve as a beacon that would guide him through life.

It was about this time I conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish'd to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. (BF, p. 82)

The first step was to determine which virtues were universally acknowledged as such. Accomplishing that objective was stymied when he realized that the authors who had written on the subject "included more or fewer ideas under the same name." For some, temperance was "confined to eating and drinking, while by others it was extended to mean the moderating every other pleasure, appetite, inclination, or passion, bodily or mental, even to our avarice and ambition" (ibid.).

Here we encounter a critical passage which, although the subject matter has nothing to do with his RMS, reveals a mode of reasoning that is precisely the one he later applied in 1768 to founding the scheme for his alphabet. In typical fashion, Franklin decided at this point "for the sake of clearness" to use more terms with "fewer ideas annex'd to each, than a few names with more ideas." In other words, after studying the texts and definitions of the different virtues

expressed by other writers, Franklin streamlined their definitions in such a way as to eliminate overlapping concepts in their meanings, the underlying principle being "one virtue for one definition."

This, I believe, is a clear demonstration that Franklin was entirely capable of conceiving an alphabetical system by applying the same model. As we shall see in Chapter 13, the idea of "one sound for one letter" dates to the great English orthoepist, Sir Thomas Smith (1568). The logic he applies here is exactly the same as he adopted in 1768 and that was finally published in 1779 under the title *Reformed Mode of Spelling*.³ For instance, recognizing the multiple possible pronunciations for any given spelling, for instance, digraphs such <ee>, <ea>, <ei>, etc. where, for instance, <ea> can be pronounced [ɛi] in "great" but [i:] in "meat," he eliminated the redundant spellings in such a way as to replace them with <ii> for long IPA /i:/ and <i> for short IPA /i/ (not necessarily [ɪ] in his system), and so on. His choice of <i>, alongside <ee> and <e> for /ɛ(:)/ was also quite a revolutionary advancement for the time and his method was later adopted by the International Phonetic Alphabet more than one hundred years later. Sadly, Webster chose not to follow his lead here. The result was that his own system was totally lopsided and, from the very beginning, and thus doomed to failure (cf. Chapters 29-30).

My point here is that, despite clear evidence that he was inspired by 16th- and 17th-century English orthoepists (cf. Chapter 13), his orthographic scheme was, in the sense I have just outlined, largely conceived in his own mind (cf. Chapters 25-28). Undoubtedly, his long experience as a typesetter since the age of twelve contributed to his thinking.

Initially, Franklin identified twelve virtues, but he was convinced to add a thirteenth by a "Quaker friend" who "kindly informed me:"

that I was generally thought proud; that my pride show'd itself frequently in conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather insolent, of which he convince'd me by mentioning several instances; I determined endeavouring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly among the rest, and I added *Humility* to my list, giving an extensive meaning to the word. (BE, p. 91)

So, he identified thirteen virtues "that at that time occur'd to me as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept, which fully express'd the

3 Here I thank Professor Duchet who, upon reading this passage of my book, made this very enlightening observation: « Ceci préfigure la terminologie moderne appliquant le principe de Würster (un terme pour un concept et un concept pour un terme), ce qui en phonographématique trouve son équivalent : un lettre pour un phonème et un seul phonème pour une lettre, principe de bi-univocité ou « biuniqueness ». "This anticipates modern terminology applying to Würster's principle (one term for a concept and one concept for a term), which finds its equivalent in phonographemics: one letter for a phoneme and one phoneme for a letter, the principle of 'biuniqueness'" (author's translation).

extent I gave to its meaning.”

1. Temperance: Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. Silence: Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation
3. Order: Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. Resolution: Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. Frugality: Make no expense but *to do good* to others or yourself; *i.e.*, waste nothing.
6. Industry: Lose no time; *be always employ'd in something useful*; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. Sincerity: *Use no hurtful deceit*; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. Justice: *Wrong none by doing injuries*, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. Moderation: Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. Cleanliness (p.84): Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.
11. Tranquillity: Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. Chastity: Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dulness, weakness, *or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation*.
13. Humility: *Imitate Jesus and Socrates*. (BF, p. 83)

Of these he placed Temperance at the top of the list (“to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits, and the force of perpetual temptations.”). This was followed by “silence” (“my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improv’d in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtain’d rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into of prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling company”). In third place, he put “order,” claiming that, even in the year 1784 when he wrote these lines, he had never mastered this virtue. “In truth, I found myself incorrigible with respect to Order; and now I am grown old, and my memory bad, I feel very sensibly the want of it.”

It is certainly not an accident that he placed chastity and humility at the bottom of his list, and one can only wonder if this was not done because, along with “order,” he never quite succeeded in disciplining himself regarding these virtues.

Once again, he outlines his principles under a form resembling the Apostles’ Creed:

- “That there is one God, who made all things.”
- “That he governs the world by his providence.”

- "That he ought to be worshiped by adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving."
- "*But that the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man.*" (my italics)
- "That the soul is immortal."
- "And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice, either here or hereafter."

Once he had identified these virtues, he then considered how to apply his new moral code. As he expressed it himself in a note in his *Autobiography*: "In the Middle Ages, Franklin, if such a phenomenon as Franklin were possible in the Middle Ages, would probably have been the founder of a monastic order—B" (BF, p. 94).

I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues. I rul'd each page with red ink, so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the day. I cross'd these columns with thirteen red lines, marking the beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the virtues, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark, by a little black spot, every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.

Conceiving God to be the fountain of wisdom, I thought it right and necessary to solicit his assistance for obtaining it; to this end I formed the following little prayer, (pg. 87) which was prefix'd to my tables of examination, for daily use.

O powerful Goodness! bountiful Father! merciful Guide! Increase in me that wisdom which discovers my truest interest. Strengthen my resolutions to perform what that wisdom dictates. Accept my kind offices to thy other children as the only return in my power for thy continual favors to me.

I used also sometimes a little prayer which I took from Thomson's Poems, viz.:
 Father of light and life, *thou Good Supreme!*
O teach me what is good; teach me Thyself!
 Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
 From every low pursuit; and fill my soul
 With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure;
 Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss! (BF, p. 86)

More directly related to the topic of this book, note here his mastery of the use of the ecclesiastical standard which he had heard since his early childhood. In Chapter 10, I discuss how important this register was in the New World in the formation of the koines that developed there, not only in the British Colonies but also in French Canada (Chapters 10 and 11). Franklin is a perfect example of this and his ability to code-switch to the secular modified standard was as natural to him as eating and drinking.

Each day was strictly organized according to a schedule which respected the moral code he had established for himself. This was justified by the "precept of

Order requiring that every part of my business should have its allotted time.”

Between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m., he would wake up, wash and address the “Powerful Goodness” with the aforementioned prayers. The question of the day would be “*What good shall I do this day?*” Then he would plan the day’s event and have breakfast. The morning would be devoted to work followed by an hour-long break at noon during which time he would eat and read. The afternoon would be devoted to work and he would finish his working day around 7:00 p.m. This would be followed by supper and an examination of the day, during which time he would ask “*what good have I done today?*” followed by a good night’s sleep.

In the end, however, he came to realize that his attempts to attain moral perfection were illusory and that, with regard to humility, “I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the *reality* of this virtue, but I had a good deal with regard to the *appearance* of it.”

In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as *pride*. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for, even if I could conceive that I had compleatly overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility. (BF, p. 92)

This passage was written while he was in Passy and he ends this portion of his *Autobiography* at this point. This leads us to Franklin’s universal views about God and religion. In a rare passage in which he praises the Quaker faith, he acknowledges their sense of “modesty” in their doubts about God’s nature, describing their position as “perhaps a singular instance in the history of mankind.” He identifies with them when they describe that unlike other sects which suppose themselves to be

in possession of all truth and that those who differ are so far in the wrong; like a man, traveling in foggy weather, those at some distance before him on the road he sees wrapped up in the fog, as well as those behind him, and also the people in the fields on each side, but near him all appears clear, tho’ in truth he is as much in the fog as any of them. (BF, p. 116)

To conclude this section, at the age of seventy-nine, Franklin summarizes the objectives of his *Art of Virtue* in which he essentially proposes a “world religion,” a code of conduct which, he believed, merged the best aspects of all religions and philosophies. In this important passage, he summarizes the moral code he had imagined at the age of twenty-one and which served as a guideline throughout his entire life:

It will be remark’d that, tho’ my scheme was not wholly without religion, there was in it no mark of any of the distinguishing tenets of any particular sect. I had purposely avoided them; for, being fully persuaded of the utility and excellency of

my method, and *that it might be serviceable to people in all religions, and intending some time or other to publish it, I would not have any thing in it that should prejudice any one, of any sect, against it.* (my italics)

I purposed writing a little comment on each virtue, in which I would have shown the advantages of possessing it, and the mischiefs attending its opposite vice; and I should have called my book *The Art of Virtue*, because it would have shown the means and manner of obtaining virtue, which would have distinguished it from the mere exhortation to be good, that does not instruct and indicate the means, but is like the apostle's man of verbal charity, who only without showing to the naked and hungry how or where they might get clothes or victuals, exhorted them to be fed and clothed.—James ii. 15, 16. (BF, p. 90)

Simply put, rather than simply exhort people to lead virtuous lives and to "do good," his objective was to show them how. The next section places more light on Franklin's broad conception of man's relationship with a being he imagined to be the Creator of the universe.

4. Franklin's *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion* (1728)

Nearly two years after his return from England, at the age of twenty-two, Franklin wrote his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion* (November 20, 1728). This document is the most complete account of his personal religious opinions, in which he stresses his belief that the universe is perfectly ordered and structured, another reference to the Great Chain of Being.

No doubt he was familiar with Isaac Newton's scientific views and his belief that the universe is strictly governed by God's laws of physics. Franklin's views of natural philosophy were similar in this respect and his studies on electricity must have filled him with awe in this respect. As we have seen, during his first stay in London, he had hoped to meet with Newton at Batson's Coffee-house to discuss his budding scientific ideas. In these pages, written in Franklin's own hand, he describes God in similar terms to those of Newton, in an ecclesiastical register (cf. Chapter 10 for the definitions of "disparitary" and "ecclesiastical standard") of contemporary English which he masters perfectly (cf. Chapter 14).

By thy Power hast thou made the glorious Sun, with his attending Worlds; from the Energy of thy mighty Will they first received [their prodigious] Motion, and by thy Wisdom hast thou prescribed the wondrous Laws by which they move. Praised be thy Name for ever. (Franklin 1728)

Like Plotinus and St. Augustine, sixteen and fourteen centuries before him respectively (cf. the Great Chain of Being, Chapter 1), and, more especially, Thomas Aquinas (cf. Chapters 1 and 9), Franklin firmly believed that God was kind and virtuous, writing "I conceive for many Reasons that he is a *good Being*" and addresses him as "Powerful Goodness" and again later, "O Creator, O Father,

I believe that thou art Good, and that thou art *pleas'd with the Pleasure* of thy Children." ... "Thy Wisdom, thy Power, and thy GOODNESS are every where clearly seen; in the Air and in the Water, in the Heavens and on the Earth. Praised be thy Name for Ever."

As argued by Mather before him, these principles led him to live according to strict principles which are reiterated in his *Art of Virtue*, a rigorous model which, he imagined, could structure and govern his own daily activities and maximize the moral principles according to which, henceforth, he hoped to live. His prayer continues:

That I may have *Tenderness for the Weak* (mu italics), and a reverent Respect for the Ancient; That I may be kind to my Neighbours, goodnatured to my Companions, and hospitable to Strangers, That I may be honest and Openhearted, gentle, merciful and Good, chearful in Spirit, rejoicing in the Good of Others, Help me, O Father... (ibid.)

We shall see that his "Tenderness for the Weak" is fully visible in practical terms when he strives to defend the colonists, first against French and Indian attacks on the western frontier, and secondly, in struggle to preserve the rights of the colonists against an increasingly autocratic monarchy (cf. second half of Part I, Chapters 6-9).

The expression "to do good" appears almost to excess, not only in his *Autobiography*, but also in his correspondence, articles and public declarations and writings. To repeat, the principles he set down in writing at the age of twenty-two were those that he followed until the end of his life, and it is quite clear that he rarely deviated from them, even if we can question the underlying motivations of some of his projects (i.e. which occasionally benefitted him more than his intended beneficiaries).

We also see that his hierarchical vision of God's position as the "Supreme Being" in the universe, with a host of lesser beings under him, in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of the Great Chain of Being, at least in terms of the supernatural order he imagines and man's inferior rank in it.

For I believe that Man is not the most perfect Being but rather One, rather that there are many Degrees of Beings his Inferiors, so there are many Degrees of Beings superior to him. Also, when I stretch my Imagination thro' and beyond our System of Planets, beyond the visible fix'd Stars themselves... then this little Ball on which we move, even in my narrow Imagination, to be almost nothing and my self less than nothing, and of no sort of Consequence. When I think thus, I imagine the great Vanity in me to suppose, that the Supremely perfect, does in the least regard such an inconsiderable Nothing as Man...

But since there is in all Men something like a natural Principle which enclines them to DEVOTION or Worship of some unseen Power; and since Men are endowed with Reason superior to all other Animals that we are in our World acquainted with; Therefore I think it seems required of me, and my Duty as a Man, to pay

Divine Regards to SOMETHING. (cited in Walters 1999, 96)

When he states that God views him as "less than nothing, and of no sort of Consequence" or that "I imagine the great Vanity in me to suppose, that the Supremely perfect, does in the least regard such an inconsiderable Nothing as Man" we see the persistence of his deist beliefs...

Another passage reinforces this vision of a perfectly ordered, hierarchically structured universe:

By thy Wisdom hast thou formed all Things, Thou hast created Man, bestowing Life and Reason, and plac'd him in Dignity superior to thy other earthly Creatures. Praised be thy Name for ever. (ibid.)

Scholars have been intrigued by his reference to the existence of "many Beings or Gods" in the following paragraph. This and similar references have confused some specialists because, if taken literally, it suggests that he had a polytheistic vision of the universe. This of course is not in keeping with his other references to "Providence."

I CONCEIVE then, that the INFINITE has created many Beings or Gods, vastly Superior to Man, who can better conceive his Perfections than we, and return him a more rational and glorious Praise. It may be that these created Gods, are immortal, or it may be that after many Ages, they are changed, and Others supply their Places. (Ibid.)

Kerry Walter (1999, 96) proposes an illuminating interpretation of Franklin's thinking on this point, which I paraphrase in the following manner.

- The universe has a divine first cause;
- Only a divine power can create reality itself;
- Reason alone cannot explain the nature of God;
- It is impossible to have a clear idea of what is infinite and incomprehensible;
- Mankind feels the need for a benevolent, good, and loving deity;
- This sentiment is shared by all human beings;
- The "created Gods" are in fact the Gods imagined by human beings around the world and, in particular, as codified by the world's major religions; in other words, they are fictional representations by men rather than real representations of divine beings;
- As such they are universal artifacts reflecting the human longing for God;
- This explains why the "created Gods" come and go or morph into different entities. (Ibid., 97)

Put another way, Franklin seems to be saying that all the world's religions are impressionistic fragments, imperfect attempts by mankind to represent and honour the true deity that created the universe and mankind. Fully understanding this deity is beyond human capacity. I would simply add that Franklin did believe that human beings have souls, that the soul is eternal and that there is an afterlife. Our place in the afterlife must be won by doing good for one's fellow men.

It is to this true deity that Franklin prays. As such, the gods honoured by the world's religions (including the Christian God) are inventions, figments of men's imaginations, intuitions and perceptions having no scientific foundation.

It is in this metaphysical framework that one can best understand his position regarding Christ's divinity. In other words, at best, he had serious doubts about it. This is why Franklin places Jesus side by side with Socrates, considering both to be "philosophers." As expressed in the letter to Reverend Stiles below, he adds that his opinion is shared "with most of the present Dissenters in England," who have expressed "some doubts as to his Divinity." In this light, we can better understand his opinion regarding Christianity which he describes as a philosophy that is superior to the world's other religions (cf. below) in its capacity to "do good," and, in this respect, he judged them all by the same standards: the ways in which religions can improve the lives of ordinary people.

Although Franklin never expanded or articulated this vision in greater detail, at least publicly, it helps explain his aloofness with regard to his own Presbyterian brand of Christianity (or to any other denomination). We shall see that, in his dealings with Reverend Whitefield, the most famous religious figure of the century and with whom Franklin had intimate dealings, the latter never succeeded in "converting" him.

In his *Autobiography*, he explains that his decision to cease attending Presbyterian Church services was on account of the minister's inability/refusal to address what was to him the essential duty of any religious figure, that is, to "inculcate moral principles" and "to make us good citizens" (BF, p. 81).

His condemnation of his own faith and, for instance and his refusal to allow Rev. Whitefield to convert him are examples of this. The irreligiosity of the French aristocracy, and the close friendships he developed with his Catholic hosts in France while serving as Minister Plenipotentiary to France for nearly a decade (consider also his friendship with Voltaire) may explain to some degree why he described his stay in France as the most enjoyable of his entire life. While in Paris, he was also criticized for his lack of morals by the very religious John Adams, future President of the United States. Seen from this perspective, Franklin's religious views appear strikingly modern.

Of course, just as Thomas Jefferson hid his "Jefferson Bible," in which he had cut out all the supernatural acts attributed to Christ, Franklin probably did not

dare to express his true opinions too openly for fear of incurring the wrath of his fellow citizens (and perhaps a drop in the sales of his *Pennsylvania Gazette*?). We get clear glimpses of his beliefs from time to time.

Franklin's opinions had predictable repercussions. Obviously deeply hurt by their son's rejection of his/their Presbyterian and Christian faith and gravely concerned for the salvation of his soul, Franklin wrote the following letter (April 13, 1738) in response to his father's entreaties in which he justifies his views. Since the objective here is to better understand the inner workings of Franklin's mind, motivations and actions, his response is of particular importance.

This document reveals a touching side of Franklin's personality. Given that Franklin's mother Abiah is largely absent from his writings and correspondence,⁴ this passage is of particular interest because of his expression of concern focuses on a mother's sentiments and fears for the well-being of her son's soul. Nevertheless, under the surface, one also senses his repressed annoyance with his parents' unwavering beliefs and uncritical assertion of their own religious views. Reading between the lines, one perceives that he had harboured the frustration expressed in this letter since his adolescence, and his exasperation resurfaces very clearly here. The explanation of his own principles is a barely veiled criticism of their certitudes.

I have your favours of the 21st of March, in which you both seem concerned lest I have imbibed some erroneous opinions. Doubtless I have my share; and when the natural weakness and imperfection of human understanding is considered, the unavoidable influence of education, custom, books, and company upon our ways of thinking, *I imagine a man must have a good deal of vanity who believes, and a good deal of boldness who affirms, that all the doctrines he holds are true, and all he rejects are false. And perhaps the same may be justly said of every sect, church, and society of men, when they assume to themselves that infallibility, which they deny to the Pope and councils.*⁵ (my italics)

Here, this statement alludes to his parents' intransience than his own. He continues:

I think opinions should be judged of by their influences and effects; and, if a man holds none that tend to make him less virtuous or more vicious, it may be concluded he holds none that are dangerous; which I hope is the case with me.

I am sorry you should have any uneasiness on my account; and if it were a thing possible for one to alter his opinions in order to please another, I know none whom I ought more willingly to oblige in that respect than yourselves. But, since it is no more in a man's power to *think* than to *look* like another, methinks all that should be expected from me is to keep my mind open to conviction, to hear

4 However, see de Cabanis's account of his mother's wisdom (cf. Chapter 2).

5 As his friend Voltaire was to write "le doute n'est pas un choix agréable, mais la certitude est absurde." "To doubt is not a pleasant choice, but being certain is absurd."

patiently and examine attentively, whatever is offered me for that end; and, if after all I continue in the same errors, I believe your usual charity will induce you to rather pity and excuse, than blame me. In the mean time your care and concern for me is what I am very thankful for.

My mother grieves, that one of her sons is an Arian, another an Arminian. What an Arminian or an Arian is, I cannot say that I very well know. The truth is, I make such distinctions very little my study. I think vital religion has always suffered, when orthodoxy is more regarded than virtue; and the Scriptures assure me, that at the last day we shall not be examined on what we *thought*, but what we *did*; and our recommendation will not be, that we said, *Lord! Lord!* but that we did good to our fellow creatures. See Matt. xxv.

Once again, he highlights the importance of doing “good works.” It appears that Abiah was also concerned about Franklin’s involvement in the Freemasons to which he responds:

As to the freemasons, I know no way of giving my mother a better account of them than she seems to have at present, since it is not allowed that women should be admitted into that secret society. She has, I must confess, on that account some reason to be displeased with it; but for any thing else, I must entreat her to suspend her judgment till she is better informed, unless she will believe me, when I assure her that they are in general a very harmless sort of people, and have no principles or practices that are inconsistent with religion and good manners... (Franklin, April 13, 1738)

5. Christianity as a Force for Social Advancement

5.1 Franklin’s Role in the First Great Awakening (1739-1740s)

One of the main reasons Franklin had ceased attending his family’s Presbyterian Church is his “disgust” for what he considered the minister’s disregard for the practical role he felt religion should play in improving people’s lives (BF, p. 81). This dates to his early frustration as an adolescent in Boston and is one of the factors that convinced him that the concept of “virtue” espoused by Deism was a viable alternative to his own faith.

Despite his criticisms of organized religion as he had known it, Franklin was always ready to support a Christian minister he considered had the sincere intention to promote practical good works that would be of direct benefit to the neediest people in society. There are two major occasions when he does this.

The first example of this was a preacher by the name of Samuel Hemphill, an articulate minister newly arrived from Ireland who preached the gospel of social improvement of the human condition. Impressed by his eloquence and his message and, most particularly, the response to his preaching among the common people, Franklin stood by him even after the Presbyterian Church

refused to allow him to preach from their pulpits. Franklin's own Presbyterian minister, Jedediah Andrews, who had "disgusted" him with his dogmatic sermons which he claimed had focused only on points of doctrine, blurted out that "free thinkers, deists, and nothings, getting a scent of him, flocked to him" (Isaacson, 2003, 108). It is quite obvious that Andrews was thinking first and foremost about Franklin.

The Presbyterian synod even accused Hemphill of heresy, at which point Franklin rushed to his support by writing an article defending in which he imagined a dialogue between two Presbyterians, a supporter and a critic. The first describes Hemphill as a "new-fangled preacher" (interesting glimpse at the local vernacular), complaining that he was speaking too much about "good works." The second quickly responds, "The Bible makes it clear" that God would have us lead "virtuous upright and good-doing lives." Here it is obvious that Franklin is speaking through his imagined character. Nevertheless, it was only after it was discovered that Hemphill had plagiarized many of his sermons that Franklin finally abandoned his support for him and, even then, only with considerable reluctance!

The second minister was the Reverend George Whitefield, a brilliant itinerant preacher from Gloucester, England, who arrived in the colonies via Northern Ireland in 1739. His preaching style, his remarkable eloquence and the content of his radical messages in the colonies was to have an enormous impact on the colonists, particularly his condemnation of sectarianism among Christians and his advocacy of a strong personal bond with God and the practical application of Christ's teachings. This had a profound and lasting impact on the nature of religious expression in North America that can still be felt today. From this point on, the nature of religious expression in America would be forever distinct from that being taught back in Britain.

Whitefield defended many of the principles for which Franklin stood, among which were his denouncement of slavery and the mistreatment of slaves and indentured servants. Whitefield also advocated educating all young people, regardless of social class, including "negroes," as well as the foundation of charities and orphanages.⁶ Franklin must certainly have taken particular pleasure in the way that Whitefield mocked petty denominational divisions among Christians when, in one sermon, Whitefield imagines a conversation with "Father Abraham." He asks Abraham:

Who Have You in heaven? Any Episcopalians (i.e. Church of England members)?
No.
Any Presbyterians?

⁶ Franklin purchased 5,000 acres of land to build a school for African Americans, but the project was never realized.

No.
 Any Baptists?
 No
 Have you any Methodists, Seceders or Independents, there?"
 No, no, no!

Feigning frustration, Whitefield asks a final question "Why, who have you there?", to which Abraham responds, "We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christian, believers in Christ – men who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony" (Waldman, 2008, 31).

In his book, *Founding Faith*, Steven Waldman stresses the impact that Whitefield's message had in emboldening the people to challenge earthly political authority:

Many historians have argued that it was through the revivals that colonists gained practice in challenging authority in general. Whitefield believed that "God's grace made it possible for even the humblest individual to take a place along the greatest of saints," wrote Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch and George Marsden. "That spirit – a frank expression of popular democracy and the sharpest attack yet on inherited privilege in colonial America – probably had much to do with the rise of a similar spirit in politics later on."

Theologically, average colonists were taught that they needn't rely on experts to translate their conversations with God; they had the insight, and right, to connect directly and interpret God's will. The dominant institutions of community life need not be heeded; if people in authority were limiting your freedom, you had the right to ignore them. "Defiance of authority was infectious," wrote William G. McLoughlin. In other words, it was in part from the evangelicals that many colonists learned how to be revolutionaries. (Waldman, 2008, 31)

Thanks to Franklin, Whitefield's powerful and soul-altering impact on literally hundreds of thousands of North American Christians was to become known as the "First Great Awakening," a religious revolution that drew masses of believers away from both the traditional Congregationalist (Puritan) Church of New England and the Church of England. Anglicanism was more prevalent in the southern colonies where loyalty to the Crown was stronger.

I argued in Chapter 1 that an early form of "liberation theology" was spawned in England at the end of the 14th century and was spread by Lollard preachers such as John Ball and John Wycliffe. I argued that this spirit of religious, social and political rebellion was introduced into North America by the first 17th-century Puritan and Quaker settlers and other dissident sects. This religious fervour never died out in America and a Second Great Awakening was spawned during the 1830s, the cause this time being the abolitionist movement and the struggle to end slavery. For obvious reasons, this spirit is particularly alive today in many modern African-American Churches.

It was Franklin's firm belief that Whitefield was moving humanity forward

by spreading a message of social justice. His focus on the doing of good rather than on what Franklin considered to be pointless matters of doctrine, led him to lend his wholehearted support to assist Whitefield. Franklin published nearly all his sermons in his *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which was, as already stated, the most widely read paper in the colonies. In this way, Franklin played a vital role in not only enhancing Reverend Whitefield's reputation and spreading his message but also in fostering the incendiary climate which was soon to envelope the colonies, both politically and religiously three decades later. The combined effect was to trigger the War of Independence.

Franklin says this of him:

but I who was intimately acquainted with him (being employed in printing his Sermons and Journals, etc.), never had the least suspicion of his integrity, but am to this day decidedly of opinion that he was in all his conduct a perfectly *honest man*, and methinks my testimony in his favour ought to have the more weight, as we had no religious connection. He us'd, indeed, sometimes to pray for my conversion, but never had the satisfaction of believing that his prayers were heard. Ours was a mere civil friendship, sincere on both sides, and lasted to his death. (BF, pps. 106-107)

Not unexpectedly, on account of his phenomenal success, the clergy of the official churches, including the Presbyterian Church, "took an immediate disliking" to Whitefield and refused to allow him to preach in their churches. Having been denied a place to preach, Whitefield preached outdoors in fields and in city streets and still thousands attended his sermons. Because Franklin shared Whitefield's condemnation of Christian "denominations," Franklin took advantage of Whitefield's popularity to encourage the construction of a common, non-denominational meeting house where ministers of any faith could preach. Built in 1740, it was initially called the New Building and, later, the Whitefield Meeting House.

And it being found inconvenient to assemble in the open air, subject to its inclemencies, the building of a house to meet in was no sooner propos'd, and persons appointed to receive contributions, but sufficient sums were soon receiv'd to procure the ground and erect the building, which was one hundred feet long and seventy broad, about the size of Westminster Hall; and the work was carried on with such spirit as to be finished in a much shorter time than could have been expected. Both house and ground were vested in trustees, expressly for the use of any preacher of any religious persuasion who might desire to say something to the people at Philadelphia; the design in building not being to accommodate any particular sect, but the inhabitants in general; *so that even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service.* (BF, p. 105)

The last phrase is often cited as proof of Franklin's openness to non-Christian

religions and, in this, there can be little doubt. This common meeting house was the first public edifice which he had constructed for the “common good” and which, in 1749, housed his Publick Academy of Philadelphia of which he was president from 1749-1754. A few decades later, it was expanded and renamed the University of Philadelphia of which Franklin was the president until his death in 1790.

For Franklin’s opinion of George Whitfield’s remarkable eloquence, cf. Chapter 14, section 2.1.

Conclusion

At the very beginning of his *Autobiography*, Franklin recounts that, while visiting the Bishop of St. Asaph’s at Twyford in 1771, he addressed his son William, explaining how he understood the role of Providence in his life.

And now I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I owe the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence, which lead me to the means I used and gave them success. My belief of this induces me to *hope*, though I must not *presume*, that the same goodness will still be exercised toward me, in continuing that happiness, or enabling me to bear a fatal reverse, which I may experience as others have done: the complexion of my future fortune being known to Him only in whose power it is to bless to us even our afflictions. (BF, p. 5)

Reference to “a fatal reverse” is premonitory, in that this passage was written only four years before his personal humiliation in the “cockpit” in 1774 and once again before the House of Lords in 1775 at which time he knew that his battle to maintain America within the British Empire was at an end (see Chapter 9). Only a month before his return to America in May, and while he was still at sea, fighting between the British Army and the Massachusetts minutemen near Boston broke out.

In March 1790, only one month before his death, Franklin responded to a letter in which Rev. Ezra Stiles, President of Yale, had asked him to express his religious beliefs. In his answer, we see that his views are essentially the same as those he had defended when he was in his early twenties:

I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That he governs the World by his Providence. That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable Service we can render him, is doing good to his other Children. That the Soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another life, respect[ing] its Conduct in this. These I take to be fundamental Principles of all sound Religion, and I regard them as you do, in whatever Sect I meet them.

It is probable that Rev. Stiles was aware of Franklin’s doubts about the divinity of Christ and it very well may be that, having got wind of Franklin’s poor health,

he sought to have Franklin recognize the divinity of Christ and thus, in Stiles' mind, help him to save his own soul. If so, he was certainly disappointed because Franklin's response is typically evasive:

As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think his system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is like to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some doubts as to his Divinity; though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble. I see no harm, however, in its being believed, if that belief has the good consequence, as probably it has, of making his doctrines more respected and more observed; especially as I do not perceive that the Supreme takes it amiss, by distinguishing the unbelievers in his government of the world with any peculiar marks of his displeasure

I shall only add, respecting myself, that, having experienced the goodness of that Being in conducting me prosperously through a long life, I have no doubt of its continuance in the next, though without the smallest conceit of meriting such goodness...

BF Philadelphia, 9 March 1790

Franklin died one month later on April 17, 1790. At the age of twenty-two, the year he wrote his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*, he imagined his own epitaph which read as follows:

The body of B. Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out, and stript of its Lettering and Gilding, Lies here, Food for Worms, But the Work shall not be wholly lost, for it will, as he believ'd, appear once more, in a new and more perfect Edition, Corrected and amended by the Author. (Franklin, *Epitaph*, Founders Online, 1728)⁷

⁷ See <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0033>. Also, cf. image of original manuscript courtesy of the Library of Congress, Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790). Epitaph, 1728. Manuscript verse. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (61), <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/franklin/franklin-epitaph.html#61>

5. Franklin the Altruist and his “Good Works” (1730-1768)

Introduction

The discussion in the previous chapter demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that Franklin’s numerous philanthropic activities were expressions of his sincere desire to “do good” in a bid to improve the lot of his fellow man. He saw these acts as fulfilling God’s will and, directly or indirectly, as a guarantee that he would be judged with kindness by the Supreme Being and thus guarantee a cozy spot in heaven for himself. We have seen that this was an inheritance from the early Puritan activist teachings of Rev. Cotton Mather, whom he knew personally.

By 1730, Franklin had gained significant business experience and was accumulating political connections that were to serve him very well in the following decades. The fact that his newspaper was now “the only one in this and the neighbouring provinces,” Franklin’s financial situation flourished considerably. As he put it, “after getting the first hundred pound, it is easier to get the second, money itself being of a prolific nature” (BF, p. 108). In Chapter 3, we saw that from 1730 to 1748, Franklin was less and less involved in the daily management of his newspaper, which he placed in the capable hands of his most gifted printer and business associate, David Hall.

This left him the time to devote to the study of natural philosophy and to undertake a wide range of projects intended to better the lives of his fellow citizens and to acquire knowledge and improve his own mind. The discussion here is not exhaustive and it does not include many contributions that he proposes for improving ship and rigging design or his discovery of the Gulf Stream upon his final return journey to America in July 1785. The main focus in this section is thus to present some of his best-known initiatives and inventions.

- The creation of secret societies for the betterment of the members and of mankind (the Junto, and his involvement with the Freemasons);
- The performing of scientific experiments on electricity to better

understand the nature of God (i.e. his famous experiments with the lightning rod);

- The undertaking of schemes to improve people's well-being and physical condition (the first public hospital, the Franklin stove, paved streets and sidewalks, street lights in the city, a flexible urinary catheter, bifocal lenses, etc.);
- The promotion of educational missions as a force for social and political liberation (the foundation of the Philadelphia Academy, the Philadelphia Philosophical Society and his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*, etc.)
- The support of political activities to protect the interests and physical safety of the common people and the most vulnerable (to be detailed in Chapters 6 through 9).

1. Secret Societies for the Betterment of Mankind

1.1 The Junto, 1727

On the model of the informal association Franklin created on his arrival in Philadelphia in 1723 before his first trip to England, Franklin was the instigator of a new far more structured and functionally practical organization known as the "Junto." In principle, the first objective of this group was to contribute to the wellbeing of their fellow citizens. The unspoken goal of this organization was also to advance the personal interests of each its members, all privileged men of wealth and influence. This was perhaps his first initiative to create a structured organization to accomplish intellectual and practical undertakings to improve the lives of all concerned. No more will be said of this here except that many of Franklin's future public and private projects were discussed with the members of this small circle of initiates.

1.2 The Freemasons, 1731

The Junto has been compared to another secret society, known as the Freemasons, of which Franklin became a member in 1731 for similar reasons. On account of its clandestine nature, relatively little is known of its functions or Franklin's role in this organization aside from the fact that he was appointed Grand Master of the Masonic Temple in 1736. Franklin remained a member of the Masonic Temple throughout his entire lifetime and, while in Paris, initiated the great French philosopher François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, into its ranks. It was during this time that Voltaire became the Godfather to Franklin's

grandson, William Temple. When Voltaire died soon afterwards in 1778, it was Franklin who gave his funeral oration following Masonic rites.

Franklin's *Autobiography* provides some insight into the reasons that may have prompted him to join the Masons and it appears that it may have been for the same reason he rejected formal Christian denominations. In the following passage, Franklin reveals a great deal about his opinions of "parties," whether political or otherwise, considering the Masonic Temple to be an alternative to traditional government or religious institutions. The opinions expressed here seem to reflect his core ambition and values:

That as soon as a party has gain'd its general point, *each member becomes intent upon his particular interest; which, thwarting others, breaks that party into divisions, and occasions more confusion.* 'That few in public affairs act from a meer view of *the good of their country*, whatever they may pretend; and, *tho' their actings bring real good to their country*, yet men primarily considered that their own and their country's interest was united, and *did not act from a principle of benevolence.* 'That fewer still, in public affairs, *act with a view to the good of mankind.* 'There seems to me at present to be great occasion for raising a *United Party for Virtue*, by *forming the virtuous and good men of all nations into a regular body*, to be govern'd by suitable *good and wise rules*, which *good and wise men* may probably be more unanimous in their obedience to, than common people are to common laws. 'I at present think that whoever attempts this aright, and is well qualified, *can not fail of pleasing God*, and of meeting with success (my italics). (BE, pp. 93-94)

After reading this passage, one might think that he is describing a future plan for a structure resembling the United Nations, but he was not alone in this mistrust of "parties," including "political parties." For the same reasons, some of his future compatriots, George Washington for instance, also believed that political parties do not necessarily act in the best interest of the people. Franklin's proposal for a "United Party for Virtue," however, must be understood in the context of his essay on the *Art of Virtue* which was presented in the last chapter. The "virtuous" and "good men" to whom he refers here are the Freemasons. Although they were sworn to not divulge the contents of their meetings, one can safely assume that Franklin must have shared many of his ideals for doing good works with them and it is very likely that key members of the Junto counted among them.

See Franklin's letter to his parents in the preceding chapter in which he criticizes his parents' rather narrow understanding of Christianity.

2. Natural Philosophy

As we have stated elsewhere, Franklin, like Newton, was convinced that the universe was regulated, in all respects, in a perfectly harmonious way by an omniscient creator. This is another indication that the concept of the Great Chain of Being was still very much alive, even in the minds of the most progressive

thinkers. The 18th century was a time when the lines between religion and natural philosophy were still viewed by many as one and the same. But as was mentioned previously, the Enlightenment philosophers were raising serious doubts about many of the supernatural dimensions of the Christian religion. This partially explains Franklin's rejection of Presbyterianism and his attraction to Deism. While he did not deny the existence of an all-powerful deity, deists nevertheless sought to explain the physical laws of the universe via rational scientific methods. This, I believe, was the ultimate design behind Franklin's experiments on electricity. Ultimately, I remain convinced that there was a genuine altruistic element to his scientific discoveries, one of which was the lightning rod. In a letter to David Hume, for instance, he explained how this discovery would save lives and property.

A building thus guarded (i.e. with a lightning rod) will not be damaged by lightning, nor any person or thing therein killed, hurt, or set on fire. For either the explosion will be prevented by the operation of the point, or, if not prevented, then the whole quantity of lightning exploded near the house, whether passing from the cloud to the earth, or from the earth to the cloud, will be conveyed in the rods. And though the iron be crooked round the corner of the building, or make ever so many turns between the upper and lower rod, the lightning will follow it, and be guided by it, without affecting the building. (Franklin to David Hume, January 24, 1762)

It was in 1746 that Franklin began to study the causes and origins of electricity and, in that year, he met a certain Dr. Spence who had just arrived from Scotland and who showed him some of his electric experiments. Even though the subject was "quite new" to him, Franklin appears not to have been very impressed. Franklin complained that Dr. Spence's experiments "were imperfectly perform'd, as he was not very expert" but, despite this, the experiments "equally surpris'd and pleased me" (BF, p. 153). This is another example of Franklin's intellectual arrogance and a perfect illustration of what a Quaker friend had kindly tried to remind him... that his list of "virtues" lacked one key concept: "humility." Recall that "Chastity" and "Humility" appear at the very bottom of his list of virtues!

Franklin's account of his research on electricity demonstrates how central England was to every aspect of colonial life, from acquiring technical equipment and books to permission to undertake any lawful enterprise. By this time, he was a wealthy man and now he had the leisure to devote himself to his numerous intellectual pursuits. In the following years, Franklin's expertise in conducting these experiments grew significantly and "by much practice, acquir'd great readiness in performing those, also, which we had an account of from England, adding a number of new ones. I say much practice, for my house was continually full, for some time, with people who came to see these new wonders" (ibid.).

When he finally felt he had achieved sufficient understanding of the subject, Franklin sent a paper he had written on "the sameness of lightning with electricity," to a certain Dr. Mitchel, one of his acquaintances in London. The

latter read the paper aloud to the members of the Society and wrote back to Franklin that his scientific hypotheses and conclusions had provoked the open laughter and mockery of the Society's "connoisseurs" of the subject. Despite this humiliating setback, Franklin's ideas were supported by a Dr. Fothergill, who "thought them of too much value to be stifled, and advis'd the printing of them" and the experiments were published in the form of a pamphlet with Dr. Fothergill writing the preface. Franklin adds that the lectures attracted significant attention, with five editions being published.

Despite this interest, Franklin complains that the papers did not attract much interest from English specialists in the field. However, a copy of his work fell into the hands of the Count de Buffon, a French scientist who had a considerable reputation not only in France but throughout Europe. However, the foremost specialist of the subject, a certain Abbé Nollet, "preceptor in Natural Philosophy for the royal family of France," who read Franklin's paper, refused to believe that a work of such technicity could have possibly been produced by an American.

Because Franklin's results contradicted his own, Nollet surmised that it had been concocted by his enemies in Paris in order to ridicule his research. A short time afterward, however, M. Le Roy, a member of the French Royal Academy of Sciences, another of Franklin's many friends, stepped forward to defend Franklin's experiments and refuted Abbé Nollet's hypotheses and conclusions. Le Roy's defense of Franklin was "translated into the Italian, German, and Latin languages; and the doctrine it contain'd was by degrees universally adopted by the philosophers of Europe." Once again, rather cruelly, Franklin concludes this episode by saying that the Abbé Nollet "lived to see himself the last of his sect"... This is another example of the merciless aspect of Franklin's character. The fact that he wrote this at the end of his life demonstrates that he never questioned his own callousness.

What really clinched the argument for Franklin was that Messrs. Dalibard and de Lor publicly conducted one of Franklin's experiments for which Franklin is best known, namely,

for drawing lightning from the clouds (... which he says) engag'd the public attention every where. M. de Lor, who had an apparatus for experimental philosophy, and lectur'd in that branch of science, undertook to repeat what he called the *Philadelphia Experiments*; and, after they were performed before the king and court, all the curious of Paris flocked to see them. (BF, p. 155)

Franklin took obvious delight in the success of this experiment and the renown that it won him.

He wrote of the "infinite pleasure I receiv'd in the success of a similar one (i.e. experiment) I made soon after with a kite at Philadelphia, as both are to be found in the histories of electricity. (ibid.)

It was only after this success that an English “physician” named Dr. Wright, while on a visit to the French Royal Academy, discovered the high esteem in which Franklin’s experiments were held in France and elsewhere on the continent. This made him wonder why Franklin’s work had been so neglected in England. Following this, the “Philadelphia experiments” were then successfully reproduced in London by “the very ingenious Mr. Canon, having verified the experiment of procuring lightning from the clouds by the use of a pointed rod” (i.e. the “lightning rod”) (BF, pp. 156-157). Franklin was soon invited to become a member of the illustrious Royal Society of London. Perhaps in an effort to hide their own embarrassment and to make amends for their having publicly ridiculed him when his experiments were first presented to them, Franklin “was excus’d the customary payments of 25 guineas.” He was also provided with the “gold medal of Sir Godfrey Copley for the year 1753, the delivery of which was accompanied by a very handsome speech of the president, Lord Macclesfield, wherein I was highly honored.” Once again, we see the degree to which Franklin craved recognition from his social superiors and his love of flattery and praise.

Of course, Franklin’s active mind is credited with other contributions to science unrelated to electricity. For example, R. Straaijer (2011, 47) points out that Franklin, expanding on his friend Joseph Priestley’s discovery that vegetables produce oxygen, first conceived the cyclical process now known as “photosynthesis.”

Possibly his [Joseph Priestley’s] most interesting discovery was the production of oxygen out of various kinds of impure air by green plants, which he communicated to Benjamin Franklin and others: “I have confirmed, explained, and extended by former observations on the purification of the atmosphere by means of vegetation; having first discovered that the green matter I treat of in my last volume is a vegetable substance” (letter to Benjamin Franklin, 27 September 1779). It was Franklin, recognizing the magnitude of this discovery, who thought of a global system of plants and animals recycling oxygen and carbon dioxide in an endless cycle (Straaijer, 2011, 47)

To conclude this section, there can be little doubt that, through his experiments on electricity and his other scientific endeavours, Franklin’s was seeking to understand the complexity of what he considered to be the laws of Creator, of Providence, a sentiment which echoes Einstein’s statement two centuries later when the latter wrote that, through his scientific studies, “I want to know God’s thoughts, the rest are details.” Just as Franklin had rejected Presbyterianism and organized religion more generally, Einstein had also rejected Judaism, probably for similar reasons. In 1936, he wrote a letter to Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein in which he states that he believed in “Spinoza’s God” (i.e. referring to Baruch Spinoza, a 17th-century Dutch “free thinker”) “who reveals himself in the lawful

harmony of the world, not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and the doings of mankind." In this respect, we are left with the impression that Einstein was himself a latter-day deist who thought precisely along the same lines as Franklin. One can only imagine the fascinating discussions the two would have shared had they been contemporaries!

I conclude this section with one final example of Franklin's remarkable ability to extract scientific meaning from the simple observations of natural and physical phenomena around him. In a letter to William Brownrigg,¹ 7 November 1773, he discussed his observations about the calming effects of oil on water. In this letter he writes that he had conducted an experiment on a pond explaining that he poured no more than a teaspoonful of oil at the "Windward Side" of the pond where the waves were beginning to form. The result was "an instant Calm, over a Space several yards square, which spread amazingly, and extended itself gradually till it reached the Lee Side, making all that Quarter of the Pond, perhaps half an Acre, as smooth as a Looking Glass."² In his very long letter he concludes:

But if there be a mutual Repulsion between the Particles of Oil, and no Attraction between Oil and Water; Oil dropt on Water will not be held together by Adhesion to the Spot whereon it falls, it will not be imbibed by the Water, it will be at Liberty to expand itself, and it will spread on a Surface that besides being smooth to the most perfect degree of Polish, prevents, perhaps by repelling the Oil, all immediate Contact, keeping it at a minute Distance from itself; and the Expansion will continue, till the mutual Repulsion between the Particles of the Oil, is weakened and reduced to nothing by their Distance.

Brownrigg and a colleague named Farish (1774) then presented Franklin's observations before the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society (of which Franklin was a member) in a paper entitled "Of Stilling the Waves by Means of Oil."

The significance of Franklin's experiment was not lost on a physical biochemist by the name of Charles Tanford, who published a book in 2004 entitled *Ben Franklin Stilled the Waves*, in which he concludes that, if Franklin had had modern scientific training, he would very probably have understood the molecular and atomic implications of how oil spreads on water (Tanford, 2004). In other words, Franklin was already thinking along same lines as modern molecular and atomic physicists.

Tanford's very important conclusion is of the utmost significance for this book in that I advance the very same argument with regard to Franklin's intuitive understanding of phonetics and phonology in Part III (Chapter 23 and Chapter

1 English physician and chemist (1712-1800).

2 Note the French expression *un mer d'huile*, literally, "a sea of oil" meaning a calm sea, without waves, a sea like a looking glass.

24) and in Part IV (Chapter 27 and Chapter 28). This explains the choice of my term “proto-phonemic” to describe his RMS scheme³ (cf. Glossary of Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Terminology).

3. Practical Projects and Inventions

3.1 The Foundation of the Philadelphia Constabulary, 1735

By the year 1735, Franklin writes that he began to turn his thoughts “a little to public affairs, beginning, however, with small matters.” He begins with what was called at the time “the city watch.” As a newly elected Assembly member, he believed it was “one of the first things that I conceiv’d to want regulation” (BF, p. 103). Franklin learned that the custom was for the Constable to select a number of citizens to accompany him at night to keep watch. However, many of these men preferred to pay him a portion of their payment and have him select substitutes to walk the rounds in their stead. The Constable would then pocket the money, go to the local tavern and, in exchange for a few rounds of drinks, he would engage a few “ragamuffins” to accompany him. The latter, rather than doing their duty would, more often than not, return to the taverns where they would continue their drinking.

Franklin presented a paper to the Junto presenting these irregularities. He also pointed out that poor widows were paying the same sum of six-shilling as wealthy merchants who had thousands of pounds of merchandise in their warehouses. His measure proposed that “appropriate men” be hired to do this job in a serious and reliable manner. It also suggested that the tax be levied in a way that would be more “equitable” and in accordance with the income of each citizen. Here we see an aspect of Franklin’s genuine concern for the less fortunate.

Franklin’s idea was adopted by the Junto and communicated to its other branches in the town. Franklin explains that, in this way, the project was made known and, a few years afterwards, in 1735, a law was passed which enacted these provisions for a more professional and dependable police force. It should come as no surprise that it was Franklin’s close friend, Breintnall who acquired the post of “sheriff” of Philadelphia’s first Constabulary, a post he held from 1735-1738.

3 I thank my son-in-law, Dr. Loïc Le Dréau, a crystallographer and chemist, for having brought the significance of Franklin’s experiment to my attention.

3.2 The Foundation of the Union Fire Company of Philadelphia, 1736

In 1736, the same year that Franklin was appointed clerk of the General Assembly (cf. Chapter 6), he formed the Union Fire Company of Philadelphia. In this case, he addressed another paper to the Junto which was published afterwards and in which he noted accidents and carelessness by which houses had been set on fire. It included a proposal on how to help prevent such negligence. This convinced the members to found a fire company composed of men who would be ready to extinguish fires and provide "mutual assistance in removing and securing the goods when in danger." Thirty men were recruited whose job it was to keep and maintain leather buckets and strong bags and baskets for removing goods. The members dedicated one meeting per month to come up with ways to avoid fires and to extinguish them when they occurred.

This institution was soon found to be so useful that many more volunteers signed than were needed for one company.

many more desiring to be admitted than we thought convenient for one company, they were advised to form another, which was accordingly done; and this went on, one new company being formed after another, till they became so numerous as to include most of the inhabitants who were men of property; and now, at the time of my writing this, tho' upward of fifty years since its establishment, that which I first formed, called the Union Fire Company, still subsists and flourishes, tho' the first members are all deceas'd but myself and one, who is older by a year than I am. (BF, p. 104)

Furthermore, thanks to the small fines imposed on those who would not participate, fire-engines, ladders, fire-hooks and other useful tools were purchased for each company. At that point, Franklin wondered, perhaps justifiably so, whether there was another town in the world at the time that was as well-equipped to fight fires as Philadelphia. Thanks to the Union Fire Company, Franklin claimed that no more than two houses ever burnt down at a time and that the fire was often extinguished before the entire house had been consumed by the flames.

3.3 The Invention of the "Franklin Stove," 1742

Franklin noticed that the heating stoves in his day were very inefficient and, in 1742, he designed a new one, now bearing his name, the design and function of which he presented in a pamphlet entitled *An Account of the New-invented Pennsylvania Fireplaces; Wherein their Construction and Manner of Operation is*

Particularly Explained; their Advantages above Every Other Method of Warming Rooms Demonstrated; and All Objections that Have Been Raised against the Use of them Answered and Obviated, etc.

Franklin writes that Governor Thomas of Pennsylvania, who on other occasions was Franklin's political opponent (cf. Chapter 6), was:

so pleased with the construction of the stove that he offered to give me a patent for the sole vending of them for a term of years but I declin'd it from a principle which has ever weighed with me on such occasions viz., *That, as we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously.* (BF, pp. 117-118)

He learned later that an ironmonger in London built a stove following Franklin's design and obtained a patent for it there from which he made a small fortune. Nevertheless, Franklin insists that his payment was in knowing that, thanks to his stove, the families of Pennsylvania and the neighbouring colonies are kept warm in winter while simultaneously saving great quantities of firewood.

3.4 The First Public Hospital of Philadelphia, 1751

Franklin mentions that, in 1751, a friend of his named Dr. Thomas Bond, imagined the building of a public hospital in Philadelphia "for the reception and cure of poor sick persons, whether inhabitants of the province or strangers. He was zealous and active in endeavoring to procure subscriptions for it, but the proposal being a novelty in America, and at first not well understood, he met but with small success." He goes on to say that it had "a very beneficent design, which has been ascrib'd to me, but was originally his." The doctor had come and paid him the supreme compliment that "there was no such thing as carrying a public-spirited project through without my being concern'd in it." Franklin wrote a piece in his newspaper about the great importance of the project and asked for donations. Provisions were made to accommodate "the sick poor in the said hospital, free of charge for diet, attendance, advice, and medicines." Franklin concocted a clever scheme to attract investors which was remarkably successful. Franklin recalls that after some time:

a convenient and handsome building was soon erected; the institution has by constant experience been found useful, and flourishes to this day; and I do not remember any of my political manœuvres, the success of which gave me at the

time more pleasure, or wherein, after thinking of it, I more easily excus'd myself for having made some use of cunning. (BF, p. 123)

3.5 Flexible Catheter, 1752

In 1752, Franklin learned that his brother was suffering terribly from kidney stones, a terrible ailment with which he was later afflicted! The solution he found to relieve his pain was to invent the first flexible urinary catheter, making it the first of its kind in America. Having said this, a similar European catheter had been invented previously.

3.6 Bifocal Glasses, 1785

In 1785, Franklin was seventy-nine years old and "myopic" (near-sighted) as well as "hyperopic" (far-sighted). As he explains, the "convexity" of the lenses of spectacles used for reading cannot be used to see objects at a greater distance. "I therefore had formerly two pair⁴ of spectacles, which I shifted occasionally, as in travelling I sometimes read, and often wanted to regard the prospects." While in France, however, he was frequently invited to have dinner with friends and acquaintances (cf. Chapter 9) and he found that he had to switch glasses constantly because "the glasses that serve me best at table to see what I eat not being the best to see the faces of those on the other side of the table who speak to me; and when one's ears are not well accustomed to the sounds of a language, a sight of the movements in the features of him that speaks helps to explain; so that I understand French better by the help of my spectacles." In order to solve this dilemma, he had "glasses cut, and half of each kind associated in the same circle. By this means, as I wear my spectacles constantly, I have only to move my eyes up or down, as I want to see distinctly far or near, the proper glasses being always ready." (Franklin to George Whately, May 23, 1785).

4 Note Franklin's use of the singular "pair" (rather than "pairs") after the numeral "two." This is now heard only in American and British dialects when the subject being qualified is a measure of some kind: two pound, five quid, four mile, three shilling, six bushel, etc. Note that five foot two, six foot, etc. is still commonly used.

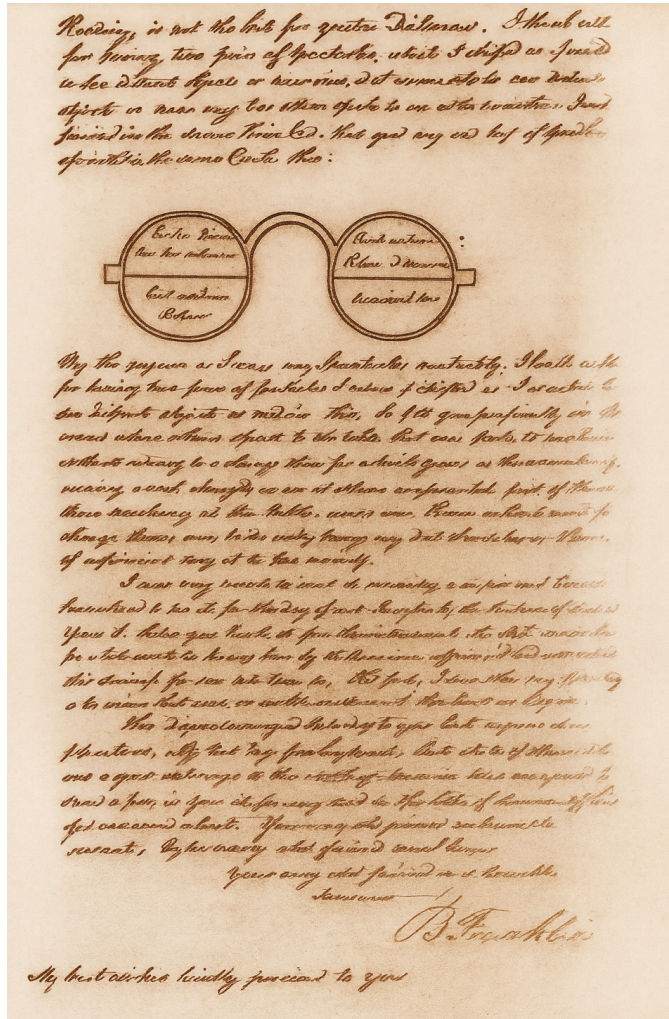


Fig. 5.1 Franklin's sketch of his bifocal glasses. Franklin's letter to George Whateley, May 23, 1785 (Benjamin Franklin Papers digital collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (digitized image retrieved from Library of Congress online), public domain.⁵

In this way, Franklin became the inventor of yet another practical devise which greatly improved people's lives as well as his own. Franklin's design was used for one hundred years until fused bifocals were invented.

3.7 Paving the Streets and Installing Street Lamps, 1757

Another of Franklin's practical preoccupations was that the roads and streets of Philadelphia were unpaved and, therefore, after a heavy rainfall the streets and

5 Franklin Papers: Series II, 1726-1818; 1784, Jan. 12-1785, May 23 (vol. 22). https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss21451.mss21451-008_00005_00333/?sp=328

market area became a "quagmire" on account of the wheels of heavy carriages constantly churning up the mud to the point that it was difficult to cross the streets. He claims to have seen inhabitants literally wading in the muck after purchasing their provisions. Once again, Franklin used his newspaper as a mouthpiece to convince the population of the need to pave the streets of Philadelphia and, after receiving the necessary funds, the market area and adjoining street were paved in stone. Franklin, by this time was a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly and he proposed a bill in 1757 for the paving of all the streets of Philadelphia. He also proposed a plan for lighting the city. He nevertheless gives credit to a Mr. John Clifton who first installed a lamp outside of his own home, an idea that impressed the rest of the citizenry. With his usual ingenuity, Franklin designed other lamps.

I therefore suggested the composing them of four flat panes, with a long funnel above to draw up the smoke, and crevices admitting air below, to facilitate the ascent of the smoke; by this means they were kept clean, and did not grow dark in a few hours, as the London lamps do, but continu'd bright till morning, and an accidental stroke would generally break but a single pane, easily repair'd. (BF, p. 125)

Franklin also arranged for the hiring of street sweepers who keep the streets clean for all the citizens. "All the inhabitants of the city were delighted with the cleanliness of the pavement that surrounded the market, it being a convenience to all, and this rais'd a general desire to have all the streets paved, and made the people more willing to submit to a tax for that purpose." (BF, pp. 125-126)

When he arrived in London in 1758, he noticed a frail old woman sweeping the street. When he asked her who paid her she responded, "Nobody, but I am very poor and in distress, and I *sweeps* before *gentlefolkses* doors, and *hopes* they will give me something" (my italics) (BF, p. 126).

In this passage, Franklin gives a rare interpretation of a non-standard London idiom. Here, the old lady, presumably a native of the city, uses "invariable <s>" with all persons (sometimes called "iterative <s>" and having habitual aspect). Note also her use of what can be interpreted as an irregular double plural "gentle-folk"⁶ + "s" + genitive "es."

This inspired him to launch a campaign to hire street sweepers in London. Considering the improvements made in Philadelphia in this regard, he proposed the idea to Dr. Fothergill, "who was among the best men I have known, and a great promoter of useful projects." This is the same Dr. Fothergill to whom he writes many years later about his role in confronting the "Paxton Boys," Scots-Irish frontiersmen who had murdered a number of pacifist Christian Moravian

6 In some varieties, "folk" in English can also be used as a plural form, "lots of folk." In other varieties, the plural form "folks" is preferred. I recently heard this London example in Ohio: "I borrowed your folkses car."

Indians (cf. Chapter 8). Franklin concludes with a very telling statement which reveals his vision of the world and humankind.

Some may think these trifling matters not worth minding or relating; but when they consider that tho' dust blown into the eyes of a single person, or into a single shop on a windy day, is but of small importance, yet the great number of the instances in a populous city, and its frequent repetitions give it weight and consequence, perhaps they (i.e. middle- or upper-class people) will not censure very severely those who bestow some attention to affairs of this seemingly low nature. *Human felicity is produc'd not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day* (my italics). Thus, if you teach a poor young man to shave himself, and keep his razor in order, you may contribute more to the happiness of his life than in giving him a thousand guineas. (BF, p. 128)

Dr. Fothergill followed through and soon thereafter, the city of London hired "watchmen" among the poor to keep the streets of London clean.

One of his last practical inventions was the "book remover." After returning to Philadelphia in 1785, he moved back into the family home with his daughter Sally and his son-in-law. He then had an extension built to house his large collection of books. However, realizing that he was no longer able to climb a ladder to take down his books from the upper shelves, he designed a pole with pincers at the end which, by squeezing a lever, would allow him to seize the book he needed. Many designs of this practical tool have been reproduced ever since and are still used to this day.

4. Educational Projects as a Force for Social Betterment

4.1 The First Subscription Public Library, 1730

Soon after his marriage to Deborah Read, Franklin writes that "my first project of a public nature was that for a subscription library." He set about this project with great fervour and, with the help of his friends in the Junto, recruited fifty subscribers who would contribute 40 shillings each followed by a further 10 shillings per year for fifty years, the intended duration of the subscription arrangement. Soon afterwards, they had doubled the number of members. As he very rightfully said,

This was the mother of all the North American subscription libraries, now so numerous. It is become a great thing itself, and continually increasing. *These libraries have improved the general conversation of the Americans, made the common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries, and perhaps have contributed in some degree to the stand so generally made throughout the colonies in defense of their privileges.* (BF, p. 70, my italics)

This last statement is a powerful reminder of how strongly Franklin believed in the idea that educating the common people would provide them with the intellectual tools to defend themselves in the political arena against those who ruled over them. This was another step in breaking the chains of social oppression. The implication is that only an educated population can defend itself from a tyrannical government and defend the freedoms of a democratic society. This was a sentiment also shared by John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

This passage also ends the second part of Franklin's *Autobiography*, which he ceased writing for the entire duration of the American Revolution. His belief that, thanks to his public libraries, American farmers were now "as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries" was a point of great pride for him and there can be no doubt that his scheme to modernize English orthography was designed in the same spirit.

What follows is an account of his recollections written ten years afterward in Passy, while he was the first American Ambassador to France. He picks up his account about the founding of the first subscription library in America saying that, until that time there were no good booksellers' shops in any of the colonies "to the southward of Boston" and "those who lov'd reading were oblig'd to send for their books from England." He adds another detail that is worth repeating, namely, that "So few were the readers at that time in Philadelphia, and the majority of us so poor, that I was not able, with great industry; to find more than fifty persons, mostly young tradesmen" (BF, p. 78).

Once again, he repeats that thanks to the public libraries, ordinary citizens improved their educations to the degree that "reading became fashionable; and our people, having no publick amusements to divert their attention from study, became better acquainted with books, and in a few years were observ'd by strangers to be better instructed and more intelligent than people of the same rank generally are in other countries" (BF, p. 77). Considering that he repeats this point, after a pause of ten years, reminds us how important the idea of improving the minds of the common people was to him.

Writing at the age of seventy-eight, Franklin states that during these early years his thriftiness assisted him in paying off his debts and, at this point, he quotes his father who often repeated one of Solomon's proverbs:

"Seest thou a man diligent in his calling, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men," I from thence considered industry as a means of obtaining wealth and distinction, which encourag'd me, tho' I did not think that I should ever literally *stand before kings*, which, however, has since happened; for I have stood before *five*, and even had the honor of sitting down with one, the King of Denmark, to dinner. (BF, pp. 79-80)

Franklin plainly viewed education combined with a well-regulated, disciplined and frugal life as the only way the common people could escape poverty and

become the intellectual equals of high-born “gentlemen” and “aristocrats.”

Franklin’s spelling reform should be seen as a corollary to the creation of not only public libraries but also, as we shall see, the foundation of public schools and universities.

4.2 Philadelphia Academy and the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, 1743-1744

A year before the outbreak of King George’s War between France and Great Britain, the Philosophical Society, as it was originally called, was founded in 1743 by Benjamin Franklin, James Alexander (lawyer) and other members of the Junto.

I had, on the whole, abundant reason to be satisfied with my being established in Pennsylvania. There were, however, two things that I regretted, there being no provision for defense, nor for a compleat education of youth; no militia, nor any college. I therefore, in 1743, drew up a proposal for establishing an academy; and at that time, thinking the Reverend Mr. Peters, who was out of employ, a fit person to superintend such an institution, I communicated the project to him; but he, having more profitable views in the service of the proprietaries, which succeeded, declin’d the undertaking; and, not knowing another at that time suitable for such a trust, I let the scheme lie a while dormant. I succeeded better the next year, 1744, in proposing and establishing a Philosophical Society. The paper I wrote for that purpose will be found among my writings, when collected. (BF, p. 109)

So, thanks to the Junto members, he was able to launch two complementary projects simultaneously. Although his attempts at creating an Academy were not initially successful, his more ambitious plan to found his Philosophical Society of Philadelphia in 1744 eventually was (now the American Philosophical Society). However, it was during that same year that yet another war broke out in the colonies between France and England known as King George’s War (1744-1748), an extension of the broader War of Austrian Succession which had been raging in Europe since 1740.

Once King George’s War (1744-1748) with France had ended, Franklin writes that he turned his thoughts again to “the affair of establishing an academy.” Once again, he sought out his friends in the Junto to advance this plan for the foundation of an Academy and detailed his ideas in a pamphlet entitled *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*. I will return to this publication when we discuss Franklin’s prescriptivist views on “correct” English grammar and pronunciation in Chapter 14.

Peace being concluded, and the association business therefore at an end, I turn’d my thoughts again to the affair of establishing an academy. The first step I took was to associate in the design a number of active friends, of whom the Junto furnished a good part; the next was to write and publish a pamphlet, entitled *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*. (BF, p. 117)

Here we see another example of the influence of Franklin's Puritan education, which placed so much emphasis on personal improvement, learning and citizenship. He distributed his pamphlet to the principal inhabitants of Philadelphia for free and proposed a subscription for "opening and supporting an academy."

In the introduction to these proposals, I stated their publication, not as an act of mine, but of some *publick-spirited gentlemen*, avoiding as much as I could, according to my usual rule, the presenting myself to the publick as the author of any scheme for their benefit. (ibid., my italics)

The subscribers were not long in making themselves known and the plan was put into execution. Twenty-four trustees were appointed, among whom were Mr. Francis, the Attorney-General of the Province of Pennsylvania, and Franklin who drew up the Constitution. Once this was done, a house was rented in 1749 and "masters" were hired (BF, p. 118).

In Chapter 14, we shall return to Franklin's plan for the creation of an "English School" within his Academy, the objective being to teach students standard English grammar and pronunciation, alongside Latin and Greek. This proposal was a novelty at the time which educators had resisted for decades. Franklin appears to have been inspired by John Locke, who was among the first to propose that Englishmen should study their own language as a formal academic discipline. As Locke explained it, men of note should not speak in the same manner as men with lesser breeding, showing that he too, despite his enlightened vision of mankind, was still bound hand and foot to the mental and religious conception of the Great Chain of Being.

I am persuaded that Franklin's idea of teaching standard grammar and "correct" pronunciation by reading texts aloud in the presence of a competent teacher who would rectify their errors, is intimately tied to his vision of his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* and his method of transcription. The details of his system will be presented in Part IV (Chapters 25-28).

After a while, there were so many students attending the Academy that another building needed to be acquired. As Franklin put it, "Providence threw into our way a large house ready built, which, with a few alterations, might well serve our purpose" (BF, p. 118), namely, the meeting house that Franklin had constructed for the benefit of Whitefield and other preachers who had been denied pulpits in the traditional churches (BF, pp. 118-119).

With characteristic shrewdness, Franklin negotiated a deal which provided that part of the building would be used for itinerant preachers, according to the original intention of the building, but also to include a "free-school for the instruction of poor children" (ibid.). Once again, the memory of his own childhood experience weighed heavily on him, a time when his father was

forced to withdraw him from school on account of his family's poverty. Franklin was charged with the modification of the building.

Writings were accordingly drawn, and on paying the debts the trustees of the academy were put in possession of the premises; and by dividing the great and lofty hall into stories, and different rooms above and below for the several schools, and purchasing some additional ground, the whole was soon made fit for our purpose, and the scholars remov'd into the building. The care and trouble of agreeing with the workmen, purchasing materials, and superintending the work, fell upon me; and I went thro' it the more cheerfully, as it did not then interfere with my private business, having the year before taken a very able, industrious, and honest partner, Mr. David Hall, with whose character I was well acquainted, as he had work'd for me four years. He took off my hands all care of the printing-office, paying me punctually my share of the profits. This partnership continued eighteen years, successfully for us both. (BF, pp. 118-119)

Thanks to contributions from Britain, including grants of land from the Proprietaries, the Academy expanded and officially became a "College" in 1755. The first Medical School in Philadelphia was inaugurated in 1765. It was finally recognized as the University of Philadelphia, although it was not officially known by this title, in 1770. Franklin was a trustee of this institution for nearly forty years and stressed the "very great pleasure of seeing a number of the youth who have receiv'd their education in it, distinguish'd by their improv'd abilities, serviceable in public stations, and ornaments to their country" (BF, p. 119).

4.3 *Poor Richard's Almanack*, a Tool for Instructing the People

As mentioned in Chapter 2, while Franklin was negotiating an alliance with France during the American War of Independence (see also Chapter 9), he befriended a young man named Pierre de Cabanis (1757-1808) who also happened to be his personal physician. He belonged to the same circle of intellectuals as Madame Helvétius (Anne-Catherine de Ligniville), le Comte de Mirabeau, de Talleyrand and others.⁷ Franklin confided many personal details about his life to him and this circle of friends. He embellished upon topics that he omitted in his *Autobiography*, purposely or not, topics that reveal an affective dimension of Franklin's character (cf. Chapters 2 and 3) and, in this case, the educational goals of his *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Thankfully, these accounts were preserved in de Cabanis' *Œuvres posthumes* (1825). Below, de Cabanis' testimony speaks for itself and corroborates much of what has already been said. Because of the importance of this little-known extract, I have quoted it in full.

7 De Cabanis lived in Madame Helvétius' home and was her personal physician. After his wife's death, Franklin proposed marriage to her, which she politely refused.

America had no almanacs and received only very poor ones from England. They were disfigured by all the nonsense with which astronomers of recent centuries had filled them, and by an excess of whatever the charlatanism, or ignorant credulity, the printers had added. Franklin undertook to give his compatriots almanacs made for them, and to replace predictions about rain and sunshine, about the birth or death of princes, with short instructions on household management, on various agricultural items, on animal husbandry, on simple hygiene for country dwellers – in short, on various subjects of domestic economy and morality.

The little booklet entitled, *Poor Richard's Almanack*, is nothing other than a selected collection of these proverbs and sayings. Thus, Franklin's newspapers and his *Almanack* began the education of America. The American people quickly benefited from the lessons of industry and independence which he had introduced in each issue. It was now up to the people to carefully preserve the wisdom they had attained, following with the same care the lessons of simplicity, philanthropy, and virtue, which are always found linked to the former as their indispensable complement. He often inserted simple allegories, maxims or proverbs in his lessons that were easily remembered and which, in addition to the eminent merit of being the product of profound wisdom, had the even more invaluable advantage of being accessible to the least cultivated minds. The small work entitled, *Poor Richard's Almanack* is nothing other than a selected collection of these proverbs and maxims.

In the sale of his Almanack Franklin found another advantage that turned out no less to the benefit of his country.⁸ All the paper used in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* and his *Almanack* was imported from Europe. To pay for it, it was necessary to export precious commodities which would have been more usefully consumed locally, for instance, in improving agriculture. Franklin decided to sell his almanacs in exchange for rags. Many small farmers who would not have bought them otherwise were able to obtain them. From that point on rags were considered something that should no longer be tossed in the gutter: they were carefully collected everywhere, and when Franklin had a sufficient supply, he built a paper mill by which means he was able to do without European factories for his printing shop. Soon he was even able to supply various merchants in Philadelphia, Boston, and other Anglo-American cities with this precious commodity. (de Cabanis, 1825, 235-236)⁹

8 This is yet another example of how "doing good" benefitted him personally!

9 Author's translation. *L'Amérique n'avait point d'Almanachs, et n'en recevait que de fort mauvais d'Angleterre. Ils étaient défigurés par toutes ces billevesées dont les astronomes des derniers siècles les avaient remplis, et par le surcroît de celles que le charlatanisme ou l'ignorante crédulité des imprimeurs y avaient ajoutées. Franklin entreprit de donner à ses compatriotes des almanachs faits pour eux, et de substituer aux prédictions sur la pluie et le beau temps, sur la naissance ou la mort des princes, de courtes instructions sur le soin du ménage, sur les divers objets de culture, sur l'éducation des animaux, sur l'hygiène simple des habitants de la campagne, en un mot, sur divers sujets d'économie domestique et de morale.... Il renfermait souvent ses leçons dans les allégories naïves, et dans des sentences ou des proverbes qui se retenaient facilement, et qui joignaient, au mérite éminent d'être le résultat de la plis profonde sagesse, l'avantage, plus inappréciable encore, d'être à la portée des esprits les moins cultivés.*

Le petit ouvrage intitulé, La Science du bonhomme Richard, n'est autre chose que le recueil choisi de ces proverbes et sentences. Ainsi, les gazettes et les almanachs de Franklin; ont commencé l'éducation de l'Amérique. Elle a rapidement profité des leçons d'industrie et d'indépendance dont il les avait semés, il ne lui reste qu'à conserver précieusement les biens

4.4 Reformed Mode of Spelling, 1768

As Looby (1984, 10) put it, “It was perhaps inevitable that Franklin, having reformed so many of the other institutions of society, would try to reform language, the basic of social institutions. From sanitation to statecraft, he promoted order and mastery.”

I would add that his proposal to reform the English spelling system was motivated by the following key idea: a good mind, improved by education, can create the conditions allowing even the humblest citizen to attain the same intellectual level as any member of the aristocratic class (cf. Chapter 14, in particular the section on Franklin and Spence). This is a goal he expresses several times in his writings, and his RMS was certainly one of these endeavours to liberate the poor from the shackles of ignorance. The aforementioned projects are closely bound to all of his other altruistic and philanthropic endeavours.

It is during the summer of 1768, while serving as an agent of the colonies in London, that Franklin took the time during a lull in his activities to put his ideas about a spelling reform on paper. His plan to reform the English orthographic system was conceived with the same rigorous scientific methodologies he applied to all of his technical projects. In Part II, I shall demonstrate that Franklin had consulted the work of the early 16th- and 17th-century orthoepists and, using their methods as a guideline, he imagined a simple but revolutionary proto-phonemic system which prefigures the creation of the International Phonetic Alphabet and includes notions of phonetics that were not theorized until the early 20th century. His system is structured in a harmonious manner (explained in Chapter 26, Chapter 27 and Chapter 28) following the precepts of the earliest of orthoepists, in particular, Sir Thomas Smith (1568), who is mentioned by name in Vaughan’s 1779 edition. Smith and Franklin’s reform proposals were founded on the elimination of superfluous characters (“one sound for one letter”). In both cases, the model of pronunciation for polite speakers was that of London’s high society. Once again, the link between social class and language propriety is manifest.

qu’elle en a recueillis, en suivant avec le même soin les leçons de simplicité, de philanthropie, de vertu, qui s’y trouvent toujours unies aux premières, comme leur complément indispensable.

Franklin trouva, dans le débit de ses almanachs, un autre avantage qui ne tourna guère moins au profit de son pays. Tout le papier qui s’y consommait était tiré d’Europe pour le payer; il fallait exporter des denrées précieuses, qui se seraient consommées plus utilement sur les lieux, dans les améliorations de la culture. Franklin fit vendre ses almanachs pour du chiffon : beaucoup de petits cultivateurs, qui ne les auraient pas achetés sans cela, purent se les procurer. Le chiffon fut regardé comme un objet qui ne devait plus être jeté dans les égouts: on le ramassa partout soigneusement et quand Franklin en eut une provision suffisante, il établit une papeterie, au moyen de laquelle il se trouva sur-le-champ en état de se passer des fabriques d’Europe, pour ses impressions; bientôt même il put fournir divers marchands de Philadelphie, de Boston et des autres villes anglo-américaines.

As we shall see in Chapter 14, this meant the elimination of all dialectal features that were current in the speech of the lower social orders. Franklin, like Noah Webster, was a prescriptivist and a grammatical purist who believed that non-standard dialects needed to be eradicated altogether. The paradox is that many of the “provincial” orthoepists, such as Sheridan (Ireland), Buchanan (Scotland), Franklin (Massachusetts) and Spence (Northumberland), rejected their own national or regional idioms in favour of the prestigious London model. Also in Chapter 14, we saw that the rejection of one’s own native variety in favour of a more one spoken by a more prestigious social group is a phenomenon known as sociolinguistic “mimetism.”

Franklin’s *Reformed Mode of Spelling* should thus be viewed in the same light as his other philanthropic ventures. His proposition for a radically new orthography for the English language was designed to allow those with the least access to formal education to master reading in record time of “one week” and, at the same time, benefit from a phonologically-based spelling system which would serve as a guide for common people to acquire a more genteel pronunciation that would be more palatable to those belonging to the dominant social classes. In this way, he sought to blur the caste-like divisions which dominated society at that time.

Sadly, because his system was published as an incomplete draft, the amount of thought that he had put into his system beforehand has never been fully recognized. For the scientific dimension of his scheme, see the conclusions to Chapter 26.

Conclusion

Chapters 4 and 5 have presented a synthesis of the ways in which Franklin’s metaphysical and philosophical beliefs grew out of his Puritan heritage in Boston and morphed after his conversion to Deism. Following his stay in London and his subsequent disillusionment with his former lifestyle he concluded that his deist beliefs, “even if they were true, were not of much use.” He put down his errata to the fact that he had been “without religion.” Yet, we explored how he fused elements of both deist and Christian beliefs to forge his own personal doctrine, which he codified in his *Art of Virtue* (1726) and his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion* (1728). The guidelines he established in his early twenties served as the moral and ethical ideal which he followed until his dying day. In the context of his inner spiritual battle, there was a constant tug-of-war between aspects of his Christian faith and values, inherited from a popular, dissenting English religious culture, and a more scientific and rational vision of the world and universe that was influenced by Enlightenment thought. He spent much of his energy reconciling the two within a coherent philosophical framework.

The second half of Part I (Chapters 6 through 9) will take his plans to “do good” to another plane, namely, the defence of the “Commonwealth”¹⁰ of Pennsylvania and its people in the wars against France. As we shall see, from a political perspective, the principles of Whiggism, and particularly his firm belief in the sovereignty of Parliament over the arbitrary power of the monarchy, were at the very heart of Franklin’s conception of the government.

It is during the endless wars against France for the control of North America that the tensions between the parliamentary leadership back in England and the American colonists, composed mainly of commoners, were spawned. The condescension of the Tory Party for the Americans, whom they generally viewed as riff-raff, renegades and convicts, is patent. Once again, the Great Chain of Being is at the heart of the conflict with those in power defending the status quo and the colonials calling for a fundamental social and political change. In this sense, the coming armed conflict between the motherland and the colonies is a harbinger of the class wars of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is in this climate that one gauges the degree to which New Englanders had inherited the popular spirit of resistance to the monarchy of their Lollard and Puritan ancestors.

Given that Part III is dedicated to the genesis of American English, the following discussion in Chapters 6-9 examines Franklin’s sense of identity, tracing the inevitable drift away from his staunch English identity and fierce loyalty to the British Empire to an increasingly politicized vision of society in which Franklin and his colleagues gradually came to identify “Americanism” as synonymous with “Whiggism.” This is precisely the theme of William Pitt the Elder’s stirring speech delivered before the House of Lords in February 1775 in which he personally defended Franklin’s honour and the rights of the British colonists in America (cf. Chapter 8 and his January 20th speech before the House of Lords).

Finally, we shall see that the budding American national identity that developed during the decade preceding the American Revolution was followed by the first signs of a new sense of American linguistic identity. The best-known proponent of this idea is Noah Webster, who supported the plan for a national American-English language founded on a popular Republican model based on the language of the people (i.e. New Englanders!), rather than what he called the “London dialect” spoken by a small, fickle elite. We shall see that Franklin’s views on English never went this far, but they may have been modified to some degree as a result of the war and the humiliations he endured in 1774 and early 1775 (cf. Chapter 8). Franklin’s RMS, written in 1768, presents a conundrum in this regard. The theoretical principles behind this discussion will be explored in Part II (Chapters 11-12) as well as Part IV (cf. Chapter 26-28) and Part V (Chapters 29-30).

¹⁰ Originally meaning “common welfare.”

Section 2. Franklin's Political
Engagement (1731-1790):
From British Patriot to American
Zealot

6. “A Dangerous Man” and “Tribune of the People”¹

Introduction

After his appointment as clerk to the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1736, his service to the people of the colony began to drift into the realm of political engagement. His long years documenting the debates and administrative business in the Assembly gave him a profound understanding of the mechanics of government as well as the rights and responsibilities of the Province of Pennsylvania vis-à-vis the Crown. When he was elected as an Assemblyman in 1751, or “burgess,” as he called it, the transition was seamless.² By this time, he had become an important voice and staunch defender of Whiggish causes. Nevertheless, as he states in his *Autobiography*, he saw his election to be another opportunity to serve his community (and his own interests!) but, once again, he makes yet another allusion to his humble beginnings. We shall see in Part IV the degree to which his poor origins had sociolinguistic repercussions in the way he viewed his own variety of Boston English.

...and I conceiv'd my becoming a member *would enlarge my power of doing good*. I would not, however, insinuate that my ambition was not flatter'd by all these promotions; it certainly was; for, considering my low beginning, they were great things to me; and they were still more pleasing, as being so many spontaneous testimonies of the public good opinion, and by me entirely unsolicited. (BF, p. 119)

Chapters 6 through 9 are dedicated to outlining Franklin's role in the events that led to the breakdown in relations between the colonies and Great Britain from the 1740s to the drafting of the US Constitution in 1787, one of the last official acts in which Franklin was to participate (cf. Chapter 9). These chapters focus on the following topics:

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- 1 Epithets given to Benjamin Franklin by Thomas Penn, Lord Proprietor of the Province of Pennsylvania, June 9, 1748.
 - 2 Franklin was an Assemblyman from 1751-1764. He was re-elected in 1773 and again in 1775 upon his return from London to Pennsylvania.

- Franklin’s dual English-American identity (this prepares the groundwork to better understand his views on language propriety (cf. Part II)). To what degree did an American, as opposed to British identity, exist?
- How the geopolitical situation and the long wars with France resulted in him leading a campaign to provide a common military defence for the colonies.
- How his plans to defend the people of Pennsylvania and the other colonies from attack were systematically stymied by an intransigent royal government who saw his efforts as an attempt to usurp the king’s authority.
- How, after the war, King George II’s unilateral imposition of taxes to pay for the wars against the French was seen as a violation of the English Constitution, the colonial charters and the English Bill of Rights (in particular Article 2, whereby King George II attempted to abrogate laws passed by Charles II granting the colony of Pennsylvania greater autonomy).³
- How Franklin’s arguments for a greater voice for the colonies in Parliament, in a last-ditch attempt to maintain the North American colonies within the Empire, ended in failure.
- How the high-handedness and intransigence of the royal authorities spawned a climate of revolt in the colonies, a conflict which was formed along party and social class lines: Tory loyalists on one side versus English and American Whigs on the other.

These chapters are designed to offer contextualization, the objective being to explain his actions as a political activist, soldier and statesman. More to the point, the fundamental issue underlying the conflict between the Americans and the motherland essentially concerns the Americans’ advocacy of the limitation of the king’s absolute powers, which the monarchy and its allies viewed as a violation of the natural God-sanctioned social order (cf. Alexander Pope’s poem, “An Essay on Man,” 1733-1734, at the end of Chapter 1). In Parts II, III, IV and V, we shall see how this same social order is reflected in contemporary attitudes

3 English Bill of Rights of 1689: “Article 1, That the pretended power of suspending the laws or the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal; Article 2, *That the pretended power of dispensing with laws or the execution of laws by regal authority, as it hath been assumed and exercised of late, is illegal*; Article 3, That the commission for erecting the late Court of Commissioners for Ecclesiastical Causes, and all other commissions and courts of like nature, are illegal and pernicious; Article 4, *That levying money for or to the use of the Crown by pretence of prerogative, without grant of Parliament, for longer time, or in other manner than the same is or shall be granted, is illegal...*” (my italics).

towards an emerging prescriptive vision of language propriety.

1. Franklin, the English-American

Within this volatile historical context, the question of the degree to which a collective identity or regional identities existed in colonial America is central to the coming discussion regarding (national) linguistic identity (Macaulay, 2002; Schneider, 2003; Trudgill, 2008; cf. Chapter 12). We shall first begin with the way Franklin defines his own national identity and, following this, move on to discuss the harsh geopolitical realities that defined the times. This will set the stage for the sociolinguistic and linguistic analyses that follow in Parts II through V.

In his writings, Franklin describes himself and his fellow colonials as "Englishmen," "British," "Britons" and "Americans" almost interchangeably. From the evidence at my disposal, I have no doubt that, in his own mind, he considered himself to be the archetypal "English-American," the earliest use of the term appearing in 1648 in Thomas Gage's *The English-American his Travail by Sea and Land; or, a New Survey of the West India's* (Oxford English Dictionary). The dual sense of identity that emerged out of the colonial experience was two-fold: while the colonials were conscious of their ethnic and cultural origins and remained deeply attached to the mother country (Lemay, 2006, 323), they were also fully aware that their experience in the North American wilderness granted them greater freedoms and a hope for a better life. The geographic distance between the colonists and their overlords back in England granted them a degree of individual freedom, in terms of improved social standing and positive self-esteem, than was possible for common people back in Britain at that time. This was to have profound political consequences in the future.

Despite his Presbyterian, anti-conformist roots and Whig orientations, there can be little doubt that, at another level, Franklin was a genuinely loyal subject of the King of England for much of his life. Nowhere is this more evident than in his "Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion" which he wrote in 1728 at the age of twenty-two. Under the heading of "Duty," he composed the following prayers:

That I may be preserved from Atheism and Infidelity, Impiety and Profaneness, and in my Addresses to Thee carefully avoid Irreverence and Ostentation, Formality and odious Hypocrisy, Help me, O Father;

That I may be loyal to my Prince, and faithful to my Country, careful for its Good, valiant in its Defence, and obedient to its Laws, abhorring Treason as much as Tyranny (my italics), Help me, O Father... (Franklin, 1728)

Given that this was intended to be his personal spiritual guide, one cannot doubt his sincerity at the time he wrote these lines. Furthermore, as Lemay (2006, 323) points out, upon taking office as the official clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly and later as an elected Assemblyman, Franklin was called upon every year to

swear three public oaths:

- a. the Oath of Allegiance to the King,
- b. the Oath of Abjuration against the claims to the kingship of England by James Stuart III (1688-1766) and
- c. the Oath of Supremacy denouncing Catholicism as a heretical belief.

The Oath of Allegiance and Oath of Abjuration merit being quoted in full:

And I, Benjamin Franklin, do solemnly promise and swear, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to his Majesty King George II. So help me God.” (Ibid., 323)

If that were not enough, the Oath of Abjuration went still further:

And I, Benjamin Franklin, do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify and declare, in my Conscience, before God and the World, that our Sovereign Lord King George II is lawful and rightful king of this Realm..., that I will bear Faith and true Allegiance to His Majesty King George... defend to the utmost of my Power against all traitorous Conspiracies and Attempts whatsoever, which shall be made against his Person, Crown or Dignity

And I do swear, That I will bear Faith and true Allegiance to his Majesty King George II, and him will *defend to the utmost of my Power, against all traitorous Conspiracies and Attempts whatsoever; which shall be made against his Person, Crown, or Dignity. And I will do my utmost Endeavour to disclose and make known to his Majesty, and his Successors, all Treasons and traitorous Conspiracies, which I shall know to be against him or any of them* (my italics).

... And I do make this Recognition, Acknowledgment, Abjuration, Renunciation, and Promise heartily, willingly and truly, upon the true Faith of a Christian. (Ibid.)

A final example will close this discussion. In a private letter addressed to Polly Stevenson (September 14, 1767b), a year before he wrote his first draft of his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*, Franklin describes his invitation to the French royal court, where he presented the results of his scientific experiments on electricity. Given the closeness of the relationship between Stevenson and Franklin, there is little reason to believe Franklin was insincere in his expressions of fidelity and affection for the King and Queen of England (unless it was simply to please her as an English patriot).

The King (of France) talk'd a good deal to Sir John, asking many Questions about our Royal Family; and did me too the Honour of taking some Notice of me; that's saying enough, for I would not have you think me so much pleas'd with this King and Queen as to have a Whit less Regard ***than I us'd to have for ours***. *No Frenchman shall go beyond me in thinking my own King and Queen the very best in the World and the most amiable* (my italics). (Franklin to Stevenson, 1767)

His employment of the past habitual aspectual “us'd to” in this passage is telling in that it implies that, only nine years before the signing of the “Declaration of

Independence," the bonds of fidelity had already been stretched to the breaking point. Nevertheless, as we shall see, supported by the former Whig Prime Minister, William Pitt the Elder (cf. Chapter 8), he fought to the bitter end to maintain the American colonies within the Empire. We shall see why in the following section. Again, the sociolinguistic implications of this attachment to the motherland must be kept in mind.

2. British America, the Source of Britain's Future Greatness

Following France's final defeat in 1760, Franklin expressed his views on America's future role in the British Empire in a letter to Lord Kame.

No one can rejoice more sincerely than I do on the Reduction of Canada;⁴ and this, not merely as *I am a Colonist, but as I am a Briton*. I have long been of Opinion, *that the Foundations of the future Grandeur and Stability of the British Empire, lie in America; and tho', like other Foundations, they are low and little seen, they are nevertheless, broad and Strong enough to support the greatest Political Structure Human Wisdom ever yet erected* (my italics). (Franklin to Lord Kames, January 3, 1760a)

His reference to "the future Grandeur and Stability of the British Empire" being in America was based on his firm belief that only continued British colonization and westward expansion of its North American territories could secure the preeminence of the British Empire and world dominance. He explains this in demographic terms in his essay entitled "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind" (Franklin, 1751) predicting that this would result in the exponential increase of the English population in America.

Thus there are suppos'd to be now upwards of One Million English Souls in North-America, (tho' 'tis thought scarce 80,000 have been brought over Sea) and yet perhaps there is not one the fewer in Britain, but rather many more, on Account of the Employment the Colonies afford to Manufacturers at Home. This Million doubling, suppose but once in 25 Years, will in another Century be more than the People of England, *and the greatest Number of Englishmen will be on this Side the Water*. What an Accession of Power to the British Empire by Sea as well as Land! What Increase of Trade and Navigation! What Numbers of Ships and Seamen! *We have been here but little more than 100 Years, and yet the Force of our Privateers in the late War, united, was greater; both in Men and Guns, than that of the whole British Navy in Queen Elizabeth's Time* (my italics). (Franklin, 1751)

Franklin's prediction that the American population would actually exceed Great Britain's by the end of the 19th century was accurate. However, as a consequence

4 Referring to General Wolfe's victory over the French on the Plains of Abraham the same year (cf. below).

of the American Revolution and the end of British immigration to America, the population expansion was not British at all but rather, from an ethnic perspective, a mixed assortment of European, African and even Asiatic nations.

In this same letter to Kames, he also suggests that the French settlers should be removed from Québec to make room for British settlement. Many of those French colonists who refused to swear allegiance to the English sovereign were indeed expelled from French Acadia and offloaded in the bayous of Louisiana where the French-speaking refugees came to be known as the “Cajuns” (< *Acadiens* [aka'dʒɛ]). Nor does he show much compunction about removing the Native American populations from their lands to make room for British settlers. From a 21st-century perspective, his reasoning and objectives are blatantly xenophobic and racist, but this was the norm rather than the exception at the time.

On at least two occasions in his *Autobiography*, he discusses how the Native American population had been devastated by alcoholism. One catches a glimpse of Franklin's impressions of them in his description of a meeting with the Mohawk Indians, in which he participated in 1754 (cf. Albany Plan, Chapter 7). At that time, the Mohawk were one of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. They were drifting away from the alliance they had formed with the English. Franklin was ordered to meet them in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and convince them to sign a treaty promising to carry on the fight against the French. He was successful in this mission.

We found they had made a great bonfire in the middle of the square; they were all drunk, men and women, quarreling and fighting. *Their dark-colour'd bodies, half naked, seen only by the gloomy light of the bonfire, running after and beating one another with firebrands, accompanied by their horrid yellings, form'd a scene the most resembling our ideas of hell that could well be imagin'd* (my italics); there was no appeasing the tumult, and we retired to our lodging. At midnight a number of them came thundering at our door, demanding more rum, of which we took no notice. (BF, p. 121)

This portrayal of the Mohawk corresponds in all respects to those recorded in the numerous “captivity narratives,” eye-witness accounts of British prisoners of war who had often spent years living with their Indigenous captors. These are invaluable sources of information for anthropologists who have a wonderful resource for studying their belief systems, kinship systems, means of subsistence (hunting and fishing techniques), relations with other tribes, methods of warfare and other traditional aspects of the Native American life. However, these accounts also regularly present detailed descriptions of the gruesome tortures of white people, which is often the focus of these tales (see the discussion of language and identity in 17th- and 18th-century New England in Chapter 11).

In the same passage, Franklin quotes a Mohawk oracle who states that the

"Great Spirit made rum...for the Indians to get drunk with." Franklin continues and ponders on the wisdom of the oracle's statement, "if it be the design of Providence to extirpate these savages in order to make room for cultivators of the earth, it seems not improbable that rum may be the appointed means. It has already annihilated all the tribes who formerly inhabited the sea-coast" (BF, p. 121).

And yet, many years later, however, during his stay in France, Franklin wrote a long piece entitled "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America" (Franklin, January 7, 1784a), in which he spoke at length about their customs and politeness, stating in his opening comments.

SAVAGES we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the Perfection of Civility; they think the same of theirs. Perhaps if we could examine the manners of different Nations with Impartiality, we should find no People so rude as to be without Rules of Politeness; nor any so polite as not to have some remains of Rudeness.

He continues his piece using the term "Indian(s)," a more respectful term at the time, rather than "savage(s)," which was the usual term for them used by the French (*les sauvages*) and, until a few decades ago, by the Québécois.

Franklin's close friend, Pierre de Cabanis, considered Franklin's essay to be an expression of his belief that the simpler one's life the happier one is. According to the latter, Franklin would have said that "*les mœurs* (customs) *des Indiens sont supérieurs aux nôtres*" and their life of total freedom in the wilderness brings them greater happiness than in the *nations civilisées* (Franklin, circa. January 7, 1784a).

3. The Geopolitical Context

3.1 French and Indian Wars: Hidden Consequences

In the previous chapters, I have alluded to the fact that one of the major unspoken causes of the coming rift with Great Britain was the monarchy's insensitive handling of the defence of the American colonies during the French and Indian Wars. These were exceedingly brutal, horrid affairs in the sense that these were "total" wars involving the wholesale slaughter of men, women and children. Both sides were guilty of this. The fighting took place in the North American forests for seventy-five years between 1688 and 1763.

– 1688-1697: "King William's War"	War of the League of Augsburg
– 1702-1713: "Queen Anne's War"	War of the Spanish Succession
– 1744-1748: "King George's War"	War of the Austrian Succession
– 1756-1763: "French and Indian War"	Seven Years' War

Nor should it be forgotten that, even after the capture of Québec in 1760, marking the final French defeat, the wars against the Native Americans did not cease. Successive wars were fought against them after the American Republic was officially recognized by Great Britain in 1783. Native American resistance to the east of the Mississippi collapsed with their defeat at Tippecanoe (Ohio) in 1811 at the hands of American General “Mad” Anthony Wayne. It is also during these long years of fierce fighting between the British and French that the majority of the Amerindian nations were decimated, partly as a result of their use as proxies, but especially on account of numerous epidemics which ravaged their populations, some of them wilfully spread.⁵ As Franklin pointed out, rampant alcoholism was another scourge they suffered from contact with the Europeans.

The effects of these brutal wars are obviously not the direct cause for later American calls for independence but, as we shall see, it is the inability of the king’s administrators and military commanders to collaborate effectively with the colonial authorities that created tensions which resulted in severe political, economic and ideological disagreements between the colonists and the Crown’s representatives. These resulted from:

- a. the King’s refusal to allow the colonial assemblies to unite their militias under a joint command to fight the French and their Amerindian allies;
- b. the unilateral decision to send British regular troops to North America to fight a war for which they were unprepared;
- c. the arbitrary taxes imposed on the colonial populations by the King to help pay for a war for which the Americans believed they had already paid a high price, both in blood and in gold.

Franklin’s role in all of these events was central, but before entering into this discussion, a brief outline of the geopolitical context in which these events occurred must be evoked.

As we shall see, one of the most important consequences was the rise in tensions between the British authorities and colonists during the long wars against the French, particularly the last two, King George’s War and the French and Indian War. It is these conflicts in particular that sowed the seeds of discord that eventually drove the British colonists to declare their independence.

5 British General Amherst is said to be the first military leader to have used biological warfare against a civilian population. During the Pontiac Rebellion in 1763, he knowingly ordered the distribution of blankets infested with smallpox to members of the Delaware tribe that had gathered around Fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). D’Errico (2020) cites the following extract written by a participant of the fighting there: entry for May 24, 1763, includes the following statement, “We gave them two Blankets and an Handkerchief out of the Small Pox Hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect.”

3.2 The French in North America

It should be recalled that the French had been present in North America long before the arrival of the first English settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. The earliest records show that Breton, Norman and Basque fishermen were already navigating off the coast of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia as early as 1504 and very probably before this. Dillard (1992) points out that there was even a Basque-Indian pidgin that had developed during the course of the 16th century. The Breton explorer Jacques Cartier claimed Québec for France in 1534 and, from that time onwards (cf. Chapter 11), the French were actively involved in exploring vast tracts of the wilderness extending from Québec and westwards via the Great Lakes as far as the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains.

The French were also extremely active in making commercial and military alliances with local tribes, the most powerful of these being the Huron, the sworn enemies of their Iroquois neighbours to the south (present-day New York state). Unlike the British, however, the French had no intention of sending large numbers of French colonists to settle North America. For this reason, the Native Americans generally viewed them to be less of a threat to their security and lifestyles. The French objective was ultimately to ensure control of the highly lucrative fur trade extending over a vast expanse of territory from Québec and the Great Lakes to the Ohio territory (what is today western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and Indiana). From there, they set about building a chain of forts and trading posts stretching along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers as far as south as New Orleans, the chief city of the French colony of the Louisiana territory. In so doing, it was strategically imperative that they block the British from expanding west of the Appalachian Mountain range into the territories that had been claimed for France.

The British, on the other hand, were intent on establishing long-term settlements as well as expanding their fur trade with the Native Americans. This put them in direct competition, and thus confrontation, with their French enemies and their Native American allies. However, the latter were at a distinct demographic disadvantage and the statistics are edifying in this regard. By 1750, the British population in North America is thought to have numbered about 1,600,000 people, against a mere 70,000 French settlers in Québec, most of these the descendants of the original founder generation.

As for the French Army and Navy, it never counted more than 10,000 men with a majority of regular army troops reinforced by marine infantry and sailors (Brumwell, 2006, 24-25). However, unlike the French conscript armies during the Napoleonic Wars a generation later, the King of France's Army was composed of highly-trained career soldiers. At the height of the French and Indian War (1755-1760), they were facing 23,000 professional British Army troops backed

up by 22,000 trained colonial militiamen (with an additional 200,000 militiamen in reserve). Seen from this perspective, the final outcome of the conflict was inevitable (*ibid.*).

3.3 The Native Americans

At the heart of this Franco-British conflict were two great Native American nations, the Huron and the Iroquois Confederacies. Both had been ancestral foes going back to pre-Colombian times. Presenting themselves as defenders of the Indian homelands, however, the French were supported by the Huron (in present-day Québec) and other allies such as the Shawnee, Miami, Wyandot, Ojibway and many others. The latter resided primarily in what the English called the “Ohio country” or “Ohio territory.” This entire region, however, had been claimed by France in 1749. As previously mentioned, thanks to their alliances, the French were successful at weaving a web of coalitions throughout the contested territories and, in this way, succeeded in offsetting their numerical inferiority, at least for a time.⁶

The powerful Iroquois, or the “Six Nations,” and their allies (mainly Algonquin), supported the English. The purported reason they stood with the English stemmed not from their love of the English, but rather an incident in 1609 involving the French explorer, Samuel de Champlain. Accompanying a group of Huron warriors deep in Iroquois territory, they encountered an Iroquois warband. In the fight that followed, Champlain purportedly killed three Iroquois chiefs. This affront was never forgotten and marked the beginning of a fierce longstanding enmity for the French which never abated. In 1666, for instance, the French Army launched a brutal winter campaign to destroy their villages and supplies, the ultimate goal being to destroy the population through starvation. They were partially successful, but these acts pushed the Iroquois Confederacy even more firmly into the English camp. I have already mentioned Franklin’s expedition in 1754 to consolidate this very same Iroquois-English alliance. It is on this occasion that he wrote his famous Albany Plan calling for the creation of a united American colonial militia army (*cf.* Chapter 7).

The French strategy was to block the British colonists from expanding westward beyond the Appalachians.⁷ To accomplish this goal, they constantly

6 French soldiers belonging to the *Compagnies franches de la marine* were ordered to live with their Indian allies for six months to a year during which time they learned their languages, battle tactics and developed trade agreements and military alliances with the various affiliated tribes. Some of these officers lived with these allies for up to twenty years and were essentially considered by the Indians as members of the tribes. Initially at least, these strong alliances provided the French with a distinct military advantage over their British opponents.

7 Jacques Cartier’s description of seeing scalps during his first encounters with the Huron indicate that the practice was already in use before the arrival of the Europeans.

launched raids on small frontier settlements from New York down to present-day Kentucky. The fact that they were composed of small numbers of people and were lightly defended made them easy targets.

The sheer ferocity of warfare in the North American wilderness was certainly not fully appreciated by British military leaders and even less so by the English gentry in Parliament who voted on questions of defence. Fighting in heavily forested environments both sides adopted the same tactics which were characterized by the patient stalking of the enemy followed by lightning attacks and, when victorious, the wholesale slaughter of the enemy, including women and children.

The Native Americans took prisoners for two principal reasons: either to adopt the captives into the tribe to replace members who had been lost to illness or to warfare, or for ceremonies involving the ritualized torture and execution of the victims. In the first case, literally thousands of British and European settlers, women and children primarily, were carried off and incorporated in the various tribes, principally between 1630s-1870s. I have already mentioned the "captivity narratives" which developed into a unique North American literary genre. These often provide detailed accounts of the unspeakable horrors that awaited the male prisoners captured in war. These acts were generally committed out of vengeance or to test the virility of their enemies.

The settlers quickly adopted the same brutal methods of combat in which the taking of scalps was a systematic and banal practice. Retaliatory raids by frontiersmen and local militias often resulted in acts of savagery which are best left unspoken here. Massachusetts and Connecticut were among the first colonies to offer what were called "scalp bounties" – payments for enemy scalps – that were carried out as early as the 1636 Pequot War (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, 64). By the time of the French and Indian War (1756-1763), the practice was generalized among both English, French and Native Americans. For instance, in 1756, Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor Robert Morris issued a proclamation offering "130 pieces of eight for the Scalp of Every Male Enemy, above the Age of Twelve Years, produced to evidence of their being killed... for the scalp of every Indian woman... 50 pieces of eight" (Sipe, 2008, 282). The French, of course, had adopted the same practice (Tucker, 2011, 708). It is with this same Governor Robert Hunter Morris that Franklin negotiated on behalf of the Assembly. Franklin says, although the Governor defended the interests of the Lords Proprietors, he nevertheless enjoyed a cordial personal relationship with him (BF, p. 132).

These unpleasant details are necessary to highlight the frontier settlers' profound terror of these French and Indian attacks. In this climate of urgency, and as an eyewitness to the savage nature of frontier warfare (see the Gnadhütten massacre below), one better understands Franklin's feelings of urgency in organizing the defence the American settlements. It also helps us comprehend

his thorough disgust with the Lord Proprietors, the royally appointed rulers over the colony of Pennsylvania who, living in safety in England, refused to contribute a single penny to the common defence of their own colony. In this increasingly volatile political climate, the settlers became increasingly convinced that the successive Hanoverian monarchs and their allies in Parliament were totally oblivious and insensitive to their plight.

3.4 The Quakers, Lords Proprietors and the Pennsylvania Assembly

The framework of the government of the Pennsylvania colony was modelled on the British government in England. In the executive role was the Lord Proprietor, assisted by the (Lieutenant-)Governor, who were only beholden to the King and Parliament for their authority. As such, he and his descendants reigned virtually as sovereign leaders. Their wealth was immense, and so was their greed. There were three "Lords Proprietors" in the colonies who had been appointed to rule over Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland. The first two were founded by Quakers. Maryland was the only colony where, initially at least, Catholics were permitted to settle.

The Pennsylvania colony also possessed a legislature which was composed of two houses: an upper house, consisting of the key landowners, who were primarily Quakers, and the lower house, also known as the Assembly. The latter was composed of elected officials (four from each county). All were property-owning free men. By the time Franklin acceded to the Assembly in 1751, it was still composed of a majority of Quakers, but also a growing number of Anglicans.

William Penn, the first Lord Proprietor of the Pennsylvania colony was given a royal charter that was signed by King Charles II in 1682 granting special rights to the Quaker colonists there and in Delaware. However, a bill passed by the Assembly and reluctantly signed into law by William Penn, known as the "Frame of 1701," gave the Assembly considerably more powers than William Penn would have cared to grant them, but he accepted these conditions rather than run the risk of being replaced by a Royal (Anglican) governor appointed by the king. Had that happened, the Royal governor could have potentially stripped the Quakers of their religious rights.

The Pennsylvania Assembly, however, jealously protected their expanded authority giving them the right to pass or repeal laws in the colony. The conflict with the English crown revolved around the issue of sovereignty. Did the King of England have the right to arbitrarily oblige the colonies to pay taxes, for instance, without the approval of the Pennsylvania House and Assembly? This was one of the key issues throughout the colonies that lay at the heart of the coming American Revolution.

After his death in 1718, William Penn was succeeded by his sons and grandsons, who continued to rule over the colony until the Revolution broke out in 1776. It merits mention that Penn's descendants returned to England and converted back to Anglicanism, and were hence firmly under both the political and religious authority of the King. Their primary interest was in making interesting real-estate deals in Pennsylvania to increase their fortune. Naturally, any threat to this activity was viewed with the utmost hostility. For reasons we shall soon see, Franklin was to be their nemesis for decades to come.

Fig. 6.1 Lords-Governors of Pennsylvania (1681-1776) (after Miller & Pencak, 1992).

Proprietor	Dates	Share	Co-Proprietor	Dates	Share
<i>William Penn</i>	1681-1718	100%			
<i>John Penn</i> <i>"The American"</i>	1718-1746	50%	Thomas Penn Richard Penn	1718-1746 1718-1746	25% 25%
<i>Thomas Penn</i>	1746-1775	75%	Richard Penn Gov. John Penn	(1746-1771) (1771-75)	25% 25%
John Penn of Stoke	1775-76	75%	John Penn	1775-76	25%

*The names in italics indicate that they served during King William's War, Queen Anne's War (William Penn), King George's War (John Penn) and the French and Indian War (Thomas Penn).

Fig. 6.2 Lieutenant Governors and Proprietors of the Province of Pennsylvania with direct dealings with Franklin, 1681-1776.

Name	Title	Dates
William Keith	Deputy Governor	1717-1726
Patrick Gordon	Deputy Governor	1726-1736
James Logan	President of Council	1736
<i>George Thomas</i>	Deputy Governor	1738-1747
<i>Anthony Palmer</i>	President of Council	1747
James Hamilton	Deputy Governor	1748-1754
<i>Robert Hunter Morris</i>	Deputy Governor	1754-1756
<i>William Denny</i>	Deputy Governor	1756-1759
<i>James Hamilton</i>	Deputy Governor	1759-1763
John Penn	Lieutenant Governor	1763-1771
Richard Penn	Lieutenant Governor	1771-1773
John Penn	Lieutenant Governor	1773-1776

*Thomas and Palmer served during King George's War while Morris, Denny and James Hamilton served during the French and Indian Wars.

One of the major conflicts which arose during the French and Indian Wars was that Lords Proprietors systematically resisted the colonial Assembly's calls to contribute to the common defence. Their position was largely tactical and inspired by the fear that, if the Assembly's assessors were given the authority to force the Proprietors to pay taxes, they would fix the rates at such a high level that they would be ruined. Their refusal also stemmed from the royal authorities' fear that, if the Lord Proprietors were forced by a colonial Assembly composed of commoners to pay taxes, this would constitute a violation of the natural hierarchical order and thus set a bad precedent for the government in England.

Rather than risk this eventuality, they preferred to transfer the tax burden onto the common people, many of whom were destitute. In western Pennsylvania, which bordered the Ohio territory, this policy provoked considerable ire and fierce resentment, particularly among the "Scotch-Irish"⁸ (i.e. Ulster Scots, Lowland Scots and northern English Protestants, i.e. "the Northern Britons") frontiersmen and their families, who were the most exposed to enemy attacks.

The Assembly was the only political institution through which the more modest elements of the free-born population could express their views. Of course, in that day and age, Catholics, women, tenant farmers, indentured servants and slaves, proportionately few in the North as we have seen, had no representation whatsoever.⁹ Because he owned his own newspaper and could rally support far better than any other single politician, but also because he was an excellent writer and political tactician, Franklin was to become their mouthpiece.

The perceived injustice of the Proprietor's obstinate refusal to contribute funds to the defence of Pennsylvania appears to have genuinely outraged Franklin and, during the last two wars with France (1744-1760), he struggled incessantly to force the powerful landlords to do their bit. His stubborn persistence to achieve greater political autonomy for the colonies for so many years made him not only the archenemy of the proprietors but also attracted the wary attention of high-ranking men surrounding the king, who wondered what Franklin's true motivations might be. Considering Franklin's humble origins, that he was from a family of Dissenters, that he rejected the Anglicanism and the authority of the King over the Church of England and the fact that he himself had espoused the radical Whig cause, for nearly two decades, the Proprietors very ably played on these suspicions to protect their privileges. Franklin was not a popular figure among the Tories in London (cf. his hostile encounter with Samuel Johnson in London).

8 I have given the older form here because many people from Appalachia refer to themselves as Scotch-Irish. I normally use the term Scots-Irish.

9 The Pennsylvania Quakers forbade capital punishment, one of the first governments in the world to do so. The crown forced the Quakers to reinstate it for "willful murder" and "treason."

3.5 Unwilling Partners: The Proprietors and the Quakers

Franklin's lucid and practical understanding of the threats that menaced the frontier settlements but also the coastal plantations which were raided by French pirates, led him to conclude that only a collective civil defence system could guarantee the safety to all of the threatened settlements was the creation of a powerful, well-trained militia. Initially, he focused only on providing for a defence of the Pennsylvania colony. Accomplishing this goal would be an expensive undertaking, however, to which neither the Proprietors nor the Quakers were willing to contribute.¹⁰ Franklin's opinion of the Lord Proprietors of the Province is made fully apparent in the following passage:

These public quarrels were all at bottom owing to the proprietaries, our hereditary governors, who, when any expense was to be incurred for the defense of their province, with incredible meanness instructed their deputies to pass no act for levying the necessary taxes, *unless their vast estates were in the same act expressly excused; and they had even taken bonds of these deputies to observe such instructions* (my italics). The Assemblies for three years held out against this injustice, tho' constrained to bend at last. At length Captain Denny, who was Governor Morris's successor, ventured to disobey those instructions; how that was brought about I shall show hereafter. (BF, p. 133)

Franklin takes malicious pleasure describing the quandary in which the Quakers found themselves: increasingly fearful that French and Indian attacks might also affect them and yet bound by the laws of their sect to abstain from any form of violence. This predicament "gave me frequent opportunities of seeing the embarrassment given them by their principle against war, whenever application was made to them, by order of the crown, to grant aid for military purposes..." When the Quakers were finally prevailed upon to make even minimal contributions to the collective effort it had to be accomplished via coded language. For instance, when contributing funds for military purposes the euphemism "*for the king's use*" was employed without saying what this "use" was for... Tax money set aside for gunpowder was said to be destined for the purchase of "grain"...! The hypocrisy of the practice simultaneously amused and annoyed Franklin.

4. Founding a Unified Colonial Militia

In his *Autobiography*, Franklin openly expresses his fears of France and Spain's belligerent intentions and the danger they presented to the Colonies during King George's War (1746-48):

¹⁰ It should be noted that, by this time, the Quakers lived in areas of eastern Pennsylvania which were less exposed to attack.

With respect to defense, Spain having been several years at war against Great Britain, and being at length join'd by France, which brought us into great danger; and the laboured and long-continued endeavour of our governor, Thomas,¹¹ to prevail with our Quaker Assembly to pass a militia law, and make other provisions for the security of the province, having proved abortive, I determined to try what might be done by a voluntary association of the people. (BF, pp. 109-110)

Of most immediate concern to the people of Philadelphia were the raids of Spanish and especially French pirates and privateers on the wealthy coastal plantations. In western Pennsylvania, the Scots-Irish settlers were in constant danger of being slaughtered by enemy attacks. In order to promote the creation of trained militias throughout the colonies, he wrote and published a pamphlet in his *Pennsylvania Gazette*, entitled *Plain Truth* (November 17, 1747) in which he highlighted the vulnerability of the colonists and called for a united defence of the colonies. There were only eight at this point: New England, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. The message was clear: if the Motherland would not protect them from their enemies, they would have to protect themselves or be destroyed piecemeal. Seven years later, this document was to form the basis of his Albany Plan (1754). By the time of the Revolution, it served as a blueprint for the Continental Congress, the Continental Army and the US Constitution. It also created a long-lasting sense of mistrust among the colonists, and the feeling that George II's government in England cared nothing for their plight.

In the conclusion to his *Plain Truth* pamphlet, Franklin appeals to the Pennsylvanians reminding them of the war-like and heroic nature of their "BRITISH RACE" (Franklin's use of upper case). He highlights the fact that:

Tho' the Great (i.e. the Proprietors and the Crown) should neither help nor join us; tho' they should even oppose our Uniting, from some mean Views of their own, yet, if we resolve upon it, and it please GOD to inspire us with the necessary Prudence and Vigour, it *may* be effected.

The tone of blatant animosity towards the authorities in England raised further doubts in London about Franklin's real motives and his loyalty to the Crown.

This is not the only time Franklin calls upon their British or English ethnicity to inspire the colonials to act. Franklin stresses to the Pennsylvanians that, except for a lack of military training and discipline, possess all of the martial virtues and skills necessary to win a war against the French and Indians. As we shall see, he and others must have sincerely believed this was the case:

'Tis computed that we have at least (exclusive of the Quakers) 60,000 Fighting Men, acquainted with Fire-Arms, many of them Hunters and Marksmen, hardy and bold. All we want is Order, Discipline, and a few Cannon. At present we are like the

11 The title of "Governor" was also given to the chief Proprietor of Pennsylvania, 1738-1747.

separate Filaments of Flax before the Thread is form'd, without Strength because without Connection; but UNION would make us strong and even formidable... ("Plain Truth," November 17, 1747)

A clear advantage of being one of the few capable printers and political writers in the colonies was Franklin's ability to spread his political views unilaterally. He writes in his *Autobiography* that, shortly after the publication of this pamphlet, which "had a sudden and surprising effect," he was summoned to organize a consultation in the large meeting house he had had built for religious and public meetings (cf. Chapters 4 and 5), the goal being to propose his plan to the general public. Franklin states that, after the meeting, twelve hundred signatures had been obtained. Copies of his proposal were sent to other areas of the country:¹²

The subscribers amounted at length to upward of ten thousand. These all furnished themselves as soon as they could with arms, formed themselves into companies and regiments, chose their own officers, and met every week to be instructed in the manual exercise, and other parts of military discipline. The women, by subscriptions among themselves, provided silk colors, which they presented to the companies, painted with different devices and mottos, which I supplied. (BF, p. 110)

The officers of the Philadelphia regiment chose Franklin as their colonel "but, conceiving myself unfit, I declin'd that station, and recommended Mr. Lawrence, a fine person, and man of influence, who was accordingly appointed." Franklin ingeniously imagined "a lottery to defray the expense of building a battery below the town, and furnishing it with cannon"... Some old cannon were purchased from Boston, but, "these not being sufficient, we wrote to England for more, soliciting, at the same time, our proprietaries for some assistance, tho' without much expectation of obtaining it" (BF, p. 110). This is the same militia whose soldiers British General Forbes would describe in 1758 as "a gathering from the scum of the worst people" (cf. Chapter 7).

Here, Franklin wiliness reveals itself once again in the way he obtains additional cannon from Governor Clinton of New York (1743-1753). In this amusing passage, Franklin delights in explaining how he succeeded in obtaining them. During a dinner between members of the Pennsylvania delegation and the New York Council, Governor Clinton "refus'd us peremptorily." But as the evening continued...

...there was great drinking of Madeira wine, as the custom of that place then was, he softened by degrees, and said he would lend us six. After a few more bumpers he advanc'd to ten; and at length he very good-naturedly conceded eighteen. They were fine cannon, eighteen-pounders, with their carriages, which we soon

12 In Franklin's English, "country" had a meaning similar to that of French *pays* meaning both "region of birth/residence" and "nation."

transported and mounted on our battery, where the associators kept a nightly guard while the war lasted, and among the rest I regularly took my turn of duty there as a common soldier. (BF, p. 111)

As one might imagine, Franklin's message that "UNION would make us strong and even formidable..." ("Plain Truth," op. cit.) did not go down well at all with the royal authorities. In particular, Thomas Penn, the Proprietor at the time, was furious with Franklin's endeavours as can be seen in his private letters to Lyndord Lardner¹³ in which he complains that Franklin's pamphlet had "done much mischief." His disdain for the colonists over whom he governed, however, is clearly demonstrated in the following remark: "I am sure the people of America are too often ready to act in defiance of the Government they live in, without associating themselves for that purpose." Elsewhere he refers to them as "the Wild unthinking Multitude" (Penn to Lardner, March 29, 1748b, Penn Letter Book, II, 223, Hist. Soc. Pa.).

In a letter to Secretary (of the Assembly) Richard Peters, Penn directly condemns Franklin's plan for a united colonial militia army stating. Once again, reading between the lines, one senses that the real issue here is Franklin's violation of the Great Chain of Being. By challenging the higher authorities, he fears the result will be "Anarchy and Confusion," the Devil's allies:

This Association is founded on a Contempt to Government, and cannot end in anything but Anarchy and Confusion. The People in general are so fond of what they call Liberty as to fall into Licentiousness, and when they know they may Act ... by Orders of their own Substitutes, in a Body, and a Military manner, and independant of this Government, why should they not Act against it. (Penn to Peters, March 30, 1748c; cf. "Plain Truth," November 17, 1747)

In particular, Penn feared what he termed "a Military Common Wealth" "acting a part little less than Treason."¹⁴ In a subsequent letter, Penn attacks Franklin directly: "He (Franklin) is a dangerous Man and I should be very Glad he inhabited any other Country, as I believe him of a very uneasy Spirit. However, as he is a Sort of Tribune of the People, he must be treated with regard" (Penn to Peters, June 9, 1748c).

Penn, who had direct access to the King and his ministers, was especially wary of the regulations that had been drawn up by the colonial "military council." Even though their officers would have been compelled to receive their commissions from the Governor's Council, which was under the direct authority of the King, he feared this arrangement would yield too much power

13 He was Proprietor Richard Penn's brother-in-law. From 1741-1752, he was the Receiver-General of Pennsylvania. Cf. Penn University Archives and Records Center (<https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-people/biography/lyndord-lardner>).

14 As it turns out, Peters supported Franklin's actions!

to the militia and thus to the common people.

As he expressed it, the plan would amount to "calling the People together for their defense, from the King to themselves, and... I fear will be esteemed greatly Criminal" (Penn to President and Council, March 30, 1748a). This was the crux of the problem, however. Neither the King nor the Proprietor proposed any concrete solutions *to protect the people* from the very real existential threats that endangered them. For the Proprietor and the King, the existence of this colonial military council was "the most dangerous part" of the Association, for it usurped "*the King's power of ordering the Militia, which you know our Kings are very jealous of*" (my italics), and if it should be known to the Ministers, would incline them to look with an Evil Eye over us on all Applications" (Penn to Peters, June 9, 1748c).

Nevertheless, Franklin's monopoly over the press and his cunning ability to sway popular opinion resurfaces again when he "calls in the aid of religion... imploring the blessing of Heaven on our undertaking" (cf. *Autobiography*) (BE, p. 111). He explains that, he decided to write another unnamed pamphlet calling for the blessing and support of God on this mission. It was redacted not only in English but also in German and sent throughout the province where the clergy of the different Protestant denominations discussed the plan with their respective congregations. He implies that even the Quakers would have been swayed by this tactic if a peace treaty with France had not been signed in 1748. The experience gained in this attempt would not be lost, however, for yet another war with the French was on the horizon.

With the peace treaty signed between France and Great Britain in 1748, the need for a militia army decreased, Thomas Penn became more amiable and his objections for the need of an "Association" abruptly vanished. By this time, Franklin had become a respected, household name across the Province. Nevertheless, it appears that he did not try to exploit his new-found fame during the October elections. To this, Thomas Penn responded in a letter to Peters (August 31):

We are well pleased to find that the Association has had so good an Effect, that the persons associated have Commissions in the Common Form, and do not act but by Authority from the president and Council, as well as that they have been so ready to attend their Duty when in Times of danger; their readiness to defend their Country is very commendable, and it was with reluctance that we objected to any thing done by persons that in general might intend nothing more than to defend themselves under their legal Commanders,... We shall ever be well pleased to encourage preparations for defense, as is our Duty and hope before another War something more regular may be done, and as Peace will very soon be declared that they will become good Friends with those who think differently from them, or at least live quietly with them. (Ibid.)

These words would be forgotten until, a few years later, the fourth and final war

erupted between France and England, known as the “French and Indian War” (an extension of the Seven Years’ War in Europe). As we shall see in the next chapter, Franklin’s plan united colonial defence, as outlined in his essay entitled *Plain Truth*, remained in the minds of the people preparing the groundwork of what was to come.

The overt indifference of the ruling authorities in London regarding the feelings of the American colonists was displayed once again by the fact that the British government was still sending criminals to the colonies, and this despite repeated appeals for this practice to cease. This was another policy which Franklin strenuously condemned. In 1751, the year he was elected to the Assembly and publicly swore his allegiance to the King, literally for at least the fifteenth time, he wrote an article entitled “Exporting of Felons to the Colonies” in which he bitterly satirized the practice, writing “Such a tender parental concern in our mother country for the welfare of her children calls aloud for the highest returns of gratitude and duty...” He then proposes that in exchange for the convicts, the colonists should send their leaders in England a gift of American rattlesnakes:

I would propose to have them carefully distributed in Saint James Park, in the spring gardens and other places of pleasure about London; in the gardens of all the nobility and gentry throughout the nation; but particularly in the gardens of the Prime Ministers, the Lords of Trade, and Members of Parliament; for to them we are most particularly obliged (my italics).

And rattlesnakes seem the most suitable returns for the human serpents sent us by our mother country. In this however, as in every other branch of trade, she will have the advantage of us... for the rattlesnake gives warning before he attempts his mischief; which the convict does not. (Shaw, 1982, p. 285)

Two decades before the American War of Independence, his open hostility towards the leadership and privileged classes of England is thus already palpable. And even if the colonists outwardly proclaimed their loyalty King George II and, later his son, George III, the aristocracy harboured suspicions that the views of the rebellious New England dissidents and Pennsylvania Quakers could expand onto a more political terrain and spread to Britain. It is this mistrust that created the impasse and setting the groundwork for the bloody disaster that would soon follow. In this sense, the Crown’s fears were well-founded.

7. The “French and Indian” Wars (1756-1763): Franklin, a Defender of the People

1. Franklin’s Call for a United Colonial Defence

By 1754, a mere six years after the end of King George’s War, it was clear that a new war between France and England was looming and the same fears and issues about their collective defence resurfaced among the colonists. The threats of concentrated French and Indian attacks on the colonial settlements – which had not ceased – were perceived to be far more ominous. Perhaps of more concern to the wealthy inhabitants along the coast and waterways was the danger of renewed attacks by French privateers, particularly on coastal plantations and shipping lanes¹ who, it was feared, would strike even harder than they had during the previous war.

Anticipating the coming confrontation, the King ordered the authorities from all the colonies to draw up a new treaty with the staunchest and fiercest of their Native American allies, the Iroquois Nation.² Franklin and the Lord Proprietor of Pennsylvania, Thomas Penn, were chief among these. One of their main tasks was to draw the recalcitrant Mohawks back into the fold, a task in which they were ultimately successful. The meeting with Mohawk and the other “nations” was set to take place in Albany, New York. Franklin decided that this would be the ideal moment to submit his updated plan (cf. “Plain Truth,” Chapter 6) for a united colonial defence which he had first proposed during King George’s War.

1 *Plain Truth* (November 17, 1747) (see <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0091>).

2 Also called the “Six Nations,” and composed of Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca and, after 1722, the Tuscarora.

In 1754, war with France being again apprehended, a congress of commissioners from the different colonies was, by an order of the Lords of Trade, to be assembled at Albany, there to confer with the chiefs of the Six Nations concerning the means of defending both their country and ours... Governor Hamilton³, having receiv'd this order, acquainted the House with it, requesting they would furnish proper presents for the Indians, to be given on this occasion; and naming the speaker (Mr. Norris) and myself to join Mr. Thomas Penn⁴ and Mr. Secretary Peters as commissioners to act for Pennsylvania. The House approv'd the nomination, and provided the goods for the present, and tho' they did not much like treating out of the provinces; and we met the other commissioners at Albany about the middle of June. (BF, p. 129)

Franklin explains that, on their way to Albany, he “drew a plan for the union of all the colonies under one government, so far as might be necessary for defence, and other important general purposes. He continues saying that he presented his plan to the Albany Congress on July 10, 1754 which was attended by more than twenty delegates from various colonies.

A previous question was first taken, whether a union should be established, which pass'd in the affirmative unanimously. A committee was then appointed, one member from each colony, to consider the several plans and report. Mine happen'd to be preferr'd, and, with a few amendments, was accordingly reported. By this plan the general government was to be administered by a president-general, appointed and supported by the crown, and a grand council was to be chosen by the representatives of the people of the several colonies, met in their respective assemblies. The debates upon it in Congress went on daily, hand in hand with the Indian business. Many objections and difficulties were started, but at length they were all overcome, and the plan was unanimously agreed to, and copies ordered to be transmitted to the Board of Trade and to the assemblies of the several provinces. (BF, p. 130)

In his bid to gain popular support for the idea of a unified military defence, Franklin published the following cartoon featuring a snake, representing the colonies, cut up in pieces (presumably by the French and Indians) with the caption “Join or Die” in his *Pennsylvania Gazette*.⁵

3 Lieutenant Governor James Hamilton (1748–1754).

4 The Lord Proprietor from 1738–1747.

5 In order, the regions are, from tale to head: South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and New England.



Fig. 7.1 Benjamin Franklin, “Join or Die,” a call to unite. Woodcut political cartoon published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754. Benjamin Franklin Papers, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Digital image no. LC-USZC4-5315, public domain, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695523/>

The idea behind the plan was that the colonial assemblies would present a “Grand Council” while the crown would appoint a “President General” whose role it would be to define the relations between the colonies and their Native American allies. On account of the fact that the crown-appointed colonial Governors tended to systematically veto the decisions made by the Assemblies, more power was granted to the Grand Council than to the “President General,” which also reserved the right to raise taxes.

In the end, the various colonial assemblies and houses realized that the foundation of a unified colonial government entailed power-sharing. To Franklin’s great disappointment, the colonial governments, jealous of their own authority and autonomy, either turned against the plan or simply chose not to vote on the matter. The Board of Trade also refused the plan. Indeed, it was not even recommended for consideration by the King on the grounds that “there was too much *prerogative* in it” (i.e. independent decision-making) while in England it was seen “to have too much of the *democratic*” (BF, p. 130).

Having said this, despite its failure, the Albany Plan did lay the groundwork for what was later to become the Continental Congress and Continental Army during the American War of Independence (1775-1783) as well as the basis for his Articles of Confederation (1777) on which the US Constitution (1787) itself was largely based.

In the end, Franklin's Albany Plan fuelled the King's fears about the possible disloyalty of his colonial subjects and contributed to a growing schism with the homeland that did not cease to widen as the years advanced. Franklin himself says as much and it is with sincere remorse that he succinctly summarizes the eventual break with Britain.

The colonies, so united, would have been sufficiently strong to have defended themselves; there would then have been no need of troops from England; of course, the subsequent pretence for taxing America, and the bloody contest it occasioned, would have been avoided. But such mistakes are not new; history is full of the errors of states and princes. (BF, p. 131)⁶

1.1 The Albany Plan Is Rejected

Franklin states in no uncertain terms that the refusal of the Albany Plan by the royal authorities, but also by members of the colonial assemblies, was one of the major reasons for the growing popular feelings of hostility for the governing authorities. The King George II's unilateral decision to send British troops to fight the French and Native Americans added salt to the wound.

The British government, not chusing to permit the union of the colonies as propos'd at Albany, and to trust that union with their defense, lest they should thereby grow too military, and feel their own strength, suspicions and jealousies at this time being entertain'd of them, sent over General Braddock with two regiments of regular English troops for that purpose. (BF, p. 134)

The plan was to march northwards 250 miles through mountain wilderness and capture the French Fort Duquesne (near modern Pittsburgh). Anticipating a rapid victory over their enemies, or so they imagined, they would push on a further 788 miles to Québec and capture the capital of New France, thus ending the war and definitively expelling the French from North America.

Without knowing the terrain or seeking the advice of the colonial authorities beforehand, General Braddock landed with his forces in Alexandria, Virginia, only to discover that the people were desperately poor and that there were not enough wagons available there to transport the soldiers' equipment and cannons. To make matters worse, there were no roads, nor were there enough horses, food or other critical supplies. Franklin recalls:

The general and all the officers were surpris'd, declar'd the expedition was then at an end, being impossible, and exclaim'd against the ministers for ignorantly landing them in a country destitute of the means of conveying their stores, baggage, etc., not less than one hundred and fifty waggons being necessary. (BF, p. 135)

6 Recall that this passage of his *Autobiography* was written after the United States had obtained its independence. One senses here that, in his heart, he was still "British."

The troops then went about slaughtering the local people’s livestock and confiscating the limited supplies of the inhabitants in destitute backwoods communities of Virginia. These abuses were not soon forgotten and created bitter feelings that would linger on until the War of Independence. The treatment of colonial women at the hands of the soldiers was another unspoken, but bitterly sensitive, bone of contention.

1.2 General Braddock’s 1755 Campaign

The only solution was to hack their way forward northward through the endless virgin forests and, from Alexandria, the British troops pushed on through the wilderness marching as far as “Frederictown” in the Maryland colony.⁷ Concerned that General Braddock’s troops would conduct themselves as they had in Virginia, the Pennsylvania Assembly feared the British Army “had conceived violent prejudices against them, as averse to the service” and named Franklin to greet General Braddock and his officers in Maryland and placate them by supplying them with whatever the army needed lest the Pennsylvanians suffer the same fate as the Virginians and Marylanders.

Aside from his well-known skills of persuasion, Franklin was chosen for this task because, as Deputy Postmaster General, the Assembly believed that he could quickly relay information to the governors “of the several provinces,” who were expected to pay for the expenses of the British Army. Franklin’s son William accompanied him on this expedition into the wilderness as his *aide de camp*.

When Franklin arrived in Frederictown (present-day Frederick, Maryland), he found General Braddock and his officers in a very foul mood. Not only was the army in desperate need of supplies but, to repeat, there were no roads here either. They had no choice but to chop their way through the expanse of mountainous forests as far as the French Fort Duquesne (near modern Pittsburgh). Franklin relates his conversation with Braddock:

“After taking the Fort Duquesne,” says he, “I am to proceed to Niagara; and, having taken that, to Frontenac, if the season will allow time; and I suppose it will, for Duquesne can hardly detain me above three or four days; and then I see nothing that can obstruct my march to Niagara.” (BE, p. 140)

In a single blow, General Braddock believed he would cripple French operations in North America and claim New France for the Crown. Franklin then exclaimed that it was a pity they had not landed in Pennsylvania “where almost every farmer had a waggon” whereupon, the General exclaimed “Then you, sir, who

7 Braddock Rd, which extends from Alexandria, Virginia, and which continues northwards through Fairfax County, Virginia, still exists under that name today.

are a man of interest there, can probably procure them for us; and I beg you will undertake it" (BF, p. 135).

Once again, Franklin's abilities as a planner and organizer are visible as are his talents of persuasion. Within only a few weeks, he managed to convince the Pennsylvania farmers to lend their support for the British war effort. In the following passage from his *Autobiography*, he addresses his calls for help to the people of the frontier settlements in particular using the carrot and stick method.

Addressed "to the inhabitants of the Counties of Lancaster, York and Cumberland," Franklin urged the people to assist the British Army in exchange for "receiving and dividing among you a very considerable sum" by supplying waggons and horses. He then appealed to their loyalty: "If you are really, as I believe you are, good and loyal subjects to his majesty, you may now do a most acceptable service." Then comes the stick:

But if you do not this service to your king and country voluntarily, when such good pay and reasonable terms are offered to you, your loyalty will be strongly suspected. The king's business must be done; so many brave troops, come so far for your defense, must not stand idle through your backwardness to do what may be reasonably expected from you. (BF, p. 138)

In typical fashion, he adds: "I have no particular interest in this affair, as, except the satisfaction of endeavouring to do good." And then he waves the stick, saying that if they do not comply: "I suppose Sir John St. Clair,⁸ the hussar, with a body of soldiers, will immediately enter the province for the purpose, which I shall be sorry to hear, because I am very sincerely and truly your friend and well-wisher" (*ibid.*).

This was not an idle threat and Franklin makes no attempt to dissimulate the rough treatment the colonial inhabitants suffered at the hands of British troops.⁹ The widening chasm between the colonial inhabitants and the military forces was to leave a permanent mark and have dire consequences only a few years later. Although this passage of his *Autobiography* was written many years after the events, one senses the outrage he felt at the conduct of the operation.

In their first march, too, from their landing till they got beyond the settlements, they had plundered and stripped the inhabitants, totally ruining some poor families, besides insulting, abusing, and confining the people if they remonstrated. *This was enough to put us out of conceit of such defenders, if we had really wanted any* (my italics). How different was the conduct of our French friends in 1781, who, during a march thro' the most inhabited part of our country from Rhode Island to

8 He is not to be confused with Scottish-born General Arthur St Clair, who commanded the disastrous expedition into the Ohio territory.

9 Note, however, that the part of his autobiography in which he writes these lines was composed in Paris in 1784, long after his attitudes toward Britain had become hostile.

Virginia, near seven hundred miles, occasioned not the smallest complaint for the loss of a pig, a chicken, or even an apple. (BF, p. 142)

Although General Braddock clearly respected Franklin and, in his reports, highly commended his efficiency in executing the aforementioned tasks, the General also expresses considerable disdain for the colonial inhabitants. Franklin's *Autobiography* provides interesting hints of the sense of superiority expressed by the British elites. His underestimation of the Native Americans' warfighting skills was particularly worrisome to Franklin who, well aware of their ferocity and bravery in battle, ventured to warn him of the potential dangers that awaited him, writing "I had conceiv'd some doubts and some fears for the event of the campaign..." He diffidently warned the General:

The only danger I apprehend of obstruction to your march is from ambuscades of Indians, who, by constant practice, are dexterous in laying and executing them; and the slender line, near four miles long, which your army must make, may expose it to be attack'd by surprise in its flanks, and to be cut like a thread into several pieces, which, from their distance, can not come up in time to support each other.

He smil'd at my ignorance, and reply'd, "These savages may, indeed, be a formidable enemy to your raw American militia, but upon the king's regular and disciplin'd troops, sir, it is impossible they should make any impression." I was conscious of an impropriety in my disputing with a military man in matters of his profession, and said no more. (BF, pp. 140-141)

General Braddock paid a terrible price for the disdain he showed towards both his enemy but also his colonial allies. Nine miles from Fort Duquesne, the British troops were annihilated in an ambush which extended all along their flanks, just as Franklin had predicted. The result was the horrific slaughter of more than 977 troops out of the 1,500 engaged, all of them seasoned, hand-picked soldiers. The American account claimed that these soldiers would have been hunted down and killed to a man, had it not been for the Virginia militiamen under the command of an obscure Colonel named George Washington, who covered their retreat using the same tactics as their enemies. This claim was authenticated by a number of other eyewitness accounts.

The officers, being on horseback, were more easily distinguish'd, pick'd out as marks, and fell very fast; and the soldiers were crowded together in a huddle, having or hearing no orders, and standing to be shot at till two-thirds of them were killed; and then, being seiz'd with a panick, the whole fled with precipitation. (BF, p. 141)

Nearly all of the officers were killed and General Braddock himself was mortally wounded. Upon his death the following day, his soldiers buried him in an unmarked grave in the middle of their newly constructed road so that his body would escape mutilation by the enemy.

Very significantly, in the minds of the colonials, the defeat vindicated the idea that, at least from a tactical perspective, colonial militiamen were better equipped to fight the Native Americans and French in this kind of treacherous backwoods environment.

This whole transaction gave us Americans the first suspicion that our exalted ideas of the prowess of British regulars had not been well founded... This general was, I think, a brave man, and might probably have made a figure as a good officer in some European war. But he had too much self-confidence, too high an opinion of the validity of regular troops, and too mean a one of both Americans and Indians. *George Croghan, our Indian interpreter, join'd him on his march with one hundred of those people, who might have been of great use to his army as guides, scouts, etc., if he had treated them kindly; but he slighted and neglected them, and they gradually left him* (my italics). (BF, p. 142)

To add insult to injury, Franklin states that “the enemy who had beaten Braddock did not at most exceed four hundred Indians and French together” and that the next in command, Lord Dunbar, “instead of proceeding, and endeavouring to recover some of the lost honour, he ordered all the stores, ammunition, etc., to be destroy’d, that he might have more horses to assist his flight towards the settlements, and less lumber to remove.” When the governors of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania begged him to send more troops to defend the frontier settlements “he continu’d his hasty march thro’ all the country, not thinking himself safe till he arriv’d at Philadelphia, where the inhabitants could protect him” (ibid.).

One of the men who had answered Franklin’s call to help construct the road was James Smith, a young woodcutter from Pennsylvania who was taken prisoner by the Caughnawaga tribe a few days before the battle and taken to the French Fort Duquesne. Here, he witnessed indescribable torture of British soldiers who were scalped and slowly roasted and skinned alive (see below for the significance of his testimony).

2. The Proprietors and the Pennsylvania Militia (1755-1763)

Meanwhile, Franklin’s campaign against the Lords Proprietors continued following Braddock’s defeat. Despite this disastrous event, Thomas Penn and his brother Richard still categorically refused to contribute financially to the defence of Pennsylvania, even with regard to the creation of a Pennsylvania militia.

Governor Morris¹⁰ (of Pennsylvania), who had continually worried the Assembly with message after message before the defeat of Braddock, to beat them into the making of acts to raise money for the defense of the province, *without taxing, among others, the proprietary estates* (my italics), and had rejected all their bills for not having such an exempting clause, now redoubled his attacks with more hope of success, the danger and necessity being greater. The Assembly, however, continu’d firm, believing they had justice on their side, and that it would be giving up an essential right if they suffered the governor to amend their money-bills... (BF, p. 144)

However, when news of the defeat reached England, “our friends there” (i.e. in the House of Commons) had been provided with all the Pennsylvania Assembly’s responses to Governor Morris’s messages. As a result of their obstinate refusal, the Commons:

rais’d a clamor against the proprietaries¹¹ for their meanness and injustice in giving their governor such instructions; some going so far as to say that, *by obstructing the defense of their province, they forfeited their right to it* (my italics). They (the Proprietor and his allies) were intimidated by this, and sent orders to their receiver-general to add five thousand pounds of their money to whatever sum might be given by the Assembly for such purpose. (BF, p. 144)¹²

This was a minor, fleeting victory for the Pennsylvania Assembly, and the next problem Franklin had to solve in creating a Pennsylvania militia was to convince the Quakers to contribute monetarily to any military endeavour.

I had been active in modelling the bill and procuring its passage, and had, at the same time, drawn a bill for establishing and disciplining of a voluntary militia, which I carried thro’ the House without much difficulty, as care was taken in it to leave the Quakers at their liberty. To promote the association necessary to form the militia, I wrote a dialogue, [14] stating and answering all the objections I could think of to such a militia, which was printed, and had, as I thought, great effect. (BF, p. 145)

This dialogue and the militia act are in the “Gentleman’s Magazine” for February and March, 1756.—[Marg. note.]

Having overcome these two major hurdles, the militia was quickly trained, equipped and ordered by Governor Morris to take charge of the defence of the northwestern frontier. As the commander of this force, Franklin was to secure the

10 Robert Hunter Morris (1700-1764), born in Trenton New Jersey, served first as Chief Justice of New Jersey’s Supreme Court and then as Deputy Governor of Pennsylvania from 1754-1756. This is this same Governor Morris who instituted “scalp bounties” in 1756.

11 In Pennsylvania, the Penn family were the Lord proprietors of the Province of Pennsylvania for three generations.

12 This statement by the Commons was to encourage him in 1764 to attempt to petition the king to replace the Proprietors with a Royal Governor under the king’s direct control. When he campaigned to accomplish this goal, he lost his seat in the Assembly (cf. below).

area around of Gnadenhütten, Pennsylvania, whose mainly German inhabitants had been slaughtered by the French and Lenape warriors. The area was still “infested by the enemy” upon their arrival. Specifically, their objective was:

to provide for the defense of the inhabitants by raising troops and building a line of forts. I undertook this military business, tho’ I did not conceive myself well qualified for it... I had but little difficulty in raising men, having soon five hundred and sixty under my command. My son, who had in the preceding war been an officer in the army rais’d against Canada, was my aid-de-camp, and of great use to me. The Indians had burned Gnadenhut, a village settled by the Moravians, and massacred the inhabitants; but the place was thought a good situation for one of the forts. ... Our first work was to bury more effectually the dead we found there, who had been half interr’d by the country people. (BF, p. 147)

Franklin then presents a rather long account of the events during this expedition describing the desolation of the area following the attacks, the burial of the slaughtered victims and the building of a stockade to ward off the French and Indians who surrounded them.

At one point, he inserts a bit of comic relief when he offers the account of a Presbyterian minister who complained to Franklin that the militiamen were not attending his sermons regularly whereupon Franklin replied to the reverend in a way which betrays his mischievous disregard for organized religion and, in particular, his own Presbyterian faith (cf. Chapter 3):

It is, perhaps, below the dignity of your profession to act as steward of the rum, but if you were to deal it out and only just after prayers, you would have them all about you.” He liked the tho’t, undertook the office, and, with the help of a few hands to measure out the liquor, executed it to satisfaction, and never were prayers more generally and more punctually attended... (BF, pp. 148-149)

Upon Franklin’s return to Philadelphia, he was pleased to see that the Philadelphia regiment had been formed and trained. Appointed as the commander of the regiment, Franklin was called to review the troops:

The officers, meeting, chose me to be colonel of the regiment, which I this time accepted. I forget how many companies we had, but we paraded about twelve hundred well-looking men, with a company of artillery, who had been furnished with six brass field-pieces, which they had become so expert in the use of as to fire twelve times in a minute. The first time I reviewed my regiment they accompanied me to my house, and would salute me with some rounds fired before my door, which shook down and broke several glasses of my electrical apparatus. (BF, pp. 150-151)

Franklin provides another account of how interference from the authorities in England once again invalidated their plans. “And my new honor proved not much less brittle; for all our commissions were soon after broken by a repeal of the law in England.”

Furthermore, the appointment of Franklin as Colonel of the Regiment and the honour shown to him by the troops, provoked the ire of the Governor and Lord Proprietor Thomas Penn when, while heading out on a journey to Virginia, he learned that Franklin was escorted by about forty uniformed cavalymen to the Lower Ferry of Philadelphia, an honour which had never been shown to him as Proprietor.

I had not been previously acquainted with the project, or I should have prevented it, being naturally averse to the assuming of state on any occasion; and I was a good deal chagrin'd at their appearance, as I could not avoid their accompanying me. What made it worse was, that, as soon as we began to move, they drew their swords and rode with them naked all the way. Somebody wrote an account of this to the proprietor, and it gave him great offense. *No such honor had been paid him when in the province, nor to any of his governors; and he said it was only proper to princes of the blood royal, which may be true for aught I know, who was, and still am, ignorant of the etiquette in such cases.* (my italics) (BF, p. 152)

The battle lines were now drawn with Franklin staunchly on the side of the Assembly and the most vulnerable of the Pennsylvanians and Governor Morris, defending the Proprietors, Thomas Penn and his brother Richard, both of whom were living in safety back in England. Thomas Penn even complained to the ministry in England accusing Franklin of being "the great obstacle to the king's service" (BF, p. 151). Playing on fears in the House of Lords that the Colonials were seeking to usurp the power of the King and declare independence, he went on to say that the military parade was proof that Franklin had the intention of placing himself at the head of the government of an independent Pennsylvania (ibid.).

This last remark is revealing in that it divulges the growing fears in England that the colonial leaders, such as Franklin, were becoming too powerful, unruly and disrespectful of the King's authority. This sentiment is repeated by the Proprietors in an attempt to fire up the King and his counsellors against them.

Showing what appears to be a genuine conciliatory aspect of his nature (cf. Governor Keith, Chapter 2), Franklin hastens to add that "notwithstanding the continual wrangling between the governor and the House, in which I, as a member, had so large a share, there still subsisted a civil intercourse between that gentleman and myself, and we never had any personal difference." Governor Morris had been trained as a lawyer and merely viewed himself as a client defending the proprietaries and Franklin standing for the Assembly. There appears to have been no animosity between the two men. "He would, therefore, sometimes call in a friendly way to advise with me on difficult points, and sometimes, tho' not often, take my advice" (BF, pp. 153-154). Recall that Governor Morris is the same man who sanctioned "scalp bounties." He was not the first, however.

3. The Dark Years

3.1 British Contempt and Wounded American Pride

For several years, the war continued to go badly for the British, especially after the arrival of the Marquis de Montcalm with several regiments of professional French regular infantry. After capturing Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario in August 1756 (1,700 British prisoners taken), he went on to take Fort Henry in August 1757 in which a regiment of 2,000 troops and colonial militia were forced to surrender (cf. below). According to the surrender terms, Montcalm allowed the British to keep their weapons (perhaps sensing what was to come) on condition that they promise not to fight the French for at least eight months. The Native Americans were enraged by what they viewed as a betrayal by Montcalm. Consequently, they broke the terms of surrender and set an ambush slaughtering over two hundred British troops and civilians in revenge. This event not only tarnished Montcalm's reputation among the English but, because Montcalm appeared untrustworthy to his Native American allies, it also led to the progressive unravelling of their alliance.

Regardless, the fighting dragged on and in July 1758, 16,000 British troops commanded by General Abercrombie attempted an attack against 4,000 of Montcalm's regular infantry at Fort Ticonderoga (Fort Carillon in French), on Lake George, New York. In a heroic but suicidal frontal assault on the French positions, 2,600 British troops, mainly Scots, were killed and wounded.

The British were not in a position to take Fort Duquesne until the end of 1758. That task fell to another Scottish General, John Forbes. Interestingly, he too expressed similar contempt for the colonials. In this short passage, he refers directly to the very same Pennsylvania militia that Franklin had so painstakingly trained and equipped. He describes their officers as "a bunch of broken Innkeepers, Horse Jockeys, & Indian traders" adding that the men were just as bad, "a gathering from the scum of the worst people, in every Country, who have wrought themselves up, into a panick at the very name of Indian who at the same time are more infamous cowards than any other race of mankind" (Calloway, 2018, 152; cf. Veyssière & Fonck, 2012, for a French perspective).

Only a few months earlier (July 30–August 7, 1758), British General Wolfe expressed similar views of the Americans in a letter (May 20, 1758) to his father, stating that:

The Americans are in general the dirtiest most contemptible cowardly dogs that you can conceive. There is no depending on them in action. They fall down dead in their own dirt and desert by battalions, officers and all. Such rascals as these are

rather an encumbrance than any real strength to an army (cf. Franklin’s response in his Imaginary Speech, February 7, 1775a).¹³

This is the same General Wolfe who won a decisive victory over the French on the Plains of Abraham a year later. Both he and the Marquis de Montcalm met their deaths in front of the city walls of Québec. The battle sealed France’s fate in North America.¹⁴

Returning to Forbes’ assault on Fort Duquesne, the price for Forbes’ overconfidence once again proved fatal to the British. On September 15, 1758, Forbes’s advance battalion of Scottish Highlanders under the command of Major James Grant was wiped out by a combined force of French and Indian warriors who launched a surprise raid thus stopping Forbes’ campaign cold.

I mention these accounts simply to show the wretched state of relations between the colonial militiamen and the British military authorities. These feelings of bitterness, resentment and antagonism between the civilian population and the British army and government authorities would only get worse.

The British remonstrances against the Americans, particularly their spinelessness and lack of honour, continued until the eve of the American Revolution. On February 7, 1775, Franklin is purported to have written an angry (but anonymous) response to comments made by the aforementioned Major Grant, who described the American provincials as cowards whose only value was to serve British troops as “beasts of burthen.”

The question of courage in battle and manhood was a constant source of friction between the native-born British and the Americans with each party vying to outdo the other. By all accounts, this open disdain for the colonials fed a growing sense of anti-Britishness which inspired a corresponding growth of American cultural awareness, regional patriotism and identity that had not existed to the same degree prior to the war. Franklin’s purported response to Grant’s accusations (or that of another likeminded American) was as follows:

I am an American: In that Character I trust this House will shew some little Indulgence to the Feelings which are excited by what fell this Moment from an honourable and military Gentleman under the Gallery. According to him, Sir, the Americans are unequal to the People of this Country in Devotion to Women, and in Courage, and in what, *in his Sight seems worse than all, they are religious* (my italics)...

13 Cited in footnote 8, Franklin, February 7, 1775a.

14 A year later, however, at the Battle of Saint Foy, the same French Regiments that had been driven from Québec the year before inflicted a severe defeat on the British Army outside the city of Québec (the bloodiest battle ever fought on Canadian soil), in which the latter lost all of their cannons. The French were set to retake the city when a large British fleet under the Command of Admiral Boscawen arrived from England with reinforcements. The French cause was doomed definitively.

... Sir, it happens very unfortunately that the Regulars have impressed the Provincials with a very indifferent Opinion of their Courage. I will tell you why. They saw General Braddock at the Head of a regular Army march with a Thousand Boastings of their Courage and Superiority, and expressing the most sovereign Contempt of the Virginian Provincials who accompanied him. But in a little Time these vain Boasters were totally routed by a very unequal Number of French and Indians, and the Provincials rendered them the unthanked Service of saving them from being cut off to a Man. In the same Manner a Detachment of Highlanders, under a Major Grant, accompanied by the Virginians under Major Lewis, being attacked by the Indians, the Highlanders fled immediately, and left the Provincials to retreat and cover them. (Franklin, February 7, 1775a)

In conclusion to his “imaginary speech,” Franklin also addressed Major Grant’s criticism that the Americans were “too religious” to which he responded as follows:

Sir, they were such Religionists, that vindicated this Country from the Tyranny of the Stuarts. Perhaps the Honourable Gentleman may have some compassionate Feelings for that unhappy Family: Does that sharpen his Resentment against the Americans; who inherit from those Ancestors, not only the same Religion, but the same Love of Liberty and Spirit to defend it?¹⁵

In this last comment, we see the ambiguity of the monarchy’s position. Grant’s attack was obviously aimed at the New England Puritan and Dissenters. Yet Franklin makes a clear reference to the fact that it was Cromwell’s Puritan forces who had defeated Charles I and that, more generally, it was the Protestant Dissenters who had driven James II and the Stuart allies into exile, not the Anglicans or Catholics who had supported him.

Indeed, the demise of the Stuart dynasty led to William of Orange’s ascension to the throne. Franklin’s message here was clearly that, if the Hanoverian kings (George I, II and III) reigned over Great Britain, it was thanks to the Puritans. It was common knowledge that all British officials holding public office, including officers in the British army, were made to swear an oath renouncing the Stuarts’ claim to the throne and pronounce their allegiance to the George II, as indicated above (cf. Chapter 6).

I ____ do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify, and declare in my Conscience, before God and the World, That our sovereign Lord King George is lawful and rightful King of the Realm of Great Britain, and all other his Majesty’s Dominions and Countries thereunto belonging. And I do solemnly and sincerely declare, *That I do believe in my Conscience, that the Person pretended to be prince of Wales, during the Life of the late King James, and since his Decease, pretending*

15 The following month, Franklin left London in disgrace but arrived in Philadelphia a hero. In April, Massachusetts militiamen and British troops fought their first battle at the Lexington and Concord marking the beginning of a bloody war that would rage on until 1781.

to be, and taking upon himself the Stile and Title of King of England, by the Name of James the Third, or of Scotland by the Name of James the Eighth, or the Stile and Title of King of Great Britain, hath not any Right or Title whatsoever to the Crown of the Realm of Great Britain, or any other the Dominions thereto belonging: And I do renounce, refuse, and abjure any Allegiance or Obedience to him (my italics) (Lemay, 2006, 323)

3.2 A Native American Account

To terminate this discussion, the following contemporary account gives an idea of the growing rift and antagonism between the colonials and the British leadership. James Smith, the Pennsylvanian woodcutter referred to above, was the lone survivor of an ambush set by a band of Caughnawaga warriors a few days before Braddock’s defeat in 1755. Wounded, he was taken by his captors to Fort Duquesne itself, where he was treated by a French military doctor. Convinced he was about to suffer the same fate as the British officers and soldiers who were being tortured to death, to his great relief, the Caughnawaga chose instead to adopt him into their tribe to replace one of their losses in war.

After having spent three years with them, he learned their language and customs and, at some point after Major Grant’s troops were defeated, he made his escape. Many years later, his adventures were printed in a widely-read captivity narrative entitled the *Remarkable Adventures in the Life and Travels of Colonel James Smith* (1799), in which he gave the Native Americans’ version of the Forbes campaign as it had been told to him by the Caughnawaga warriors who had taken part in the battle.

... there were a great number of American riflemen along with the redcoats, who scattered out, took trees and were good marksmen; there they (the Indians) found they could not accomplish their design, and were obliged to retreat. When they returned from the battle of Fort Du Quesne, the Indians concluded that they would go to their hunting. The French endeavored to persuade them to stay and try another battle. The Indians said if it was only the redcoats they had to do with they could soon subdue them, but they could not withstand the *Ashalecoa*, or the Great Knife, which was the name they gave to the Virginians. (Smith, 1799, 104-105)¹⁶

The colonial militia’s habit of “taking to trees” (hiding behind trees) and firing their rifles from a prone position was the tactic British professionals condemned as cowardly. However, it was the same commonsense tactic used by Native American warriors. As a Pennsylvanian, Smith had no reason to praise the Virginians, and this detail may lend additional credibility to his story. Nevertheless, regardless of whether his testimony is fully accurate or not, such

16 Nevertheless, this self-confidence on the part of the Americans was also misplaced, considering that the American Army suffered similar bloody defeats at the hands of the same Native American nations during the 1780s and 1790s, and again during the War of 1812.

accounts reinforced the belief among the Americans, starting with Franklin himself, that if they had had the proper training and weaponry, the colonial militias could have defeated the French and their Native Americans allies without the help of the British Army.

Sensing the tide was turning against the French, the Lenape, Shawnee and Mingo tribes, like the Caughnawaga, also refused to continue the fight. Finding themselves increasingly isolated, the French were obliged to withdraw their forces the following month. Before retreating, the French troops burnt down Fort Duquesne and began the long trek northward back towards Québec, marking the beginning of the end of New France. The British occupied what was left of the fort and immediately set about building a new one, which was named Fort Pitt in honour of Sir William Pitt the Elder (Lord Chatham), then the British Prime Minister.¹⁷ Suffering from dysentery, General Forbes died shortly afterwards.

4. Facing Down the Proprietors

Let us now return to Franklin's long political battle against the Proprietors. Shortly after Governor Morris was recalled to England, he was replaced by Governor Denny in 1756. Upon his arrival in America, the latter presented Franklin with a medal on behalf of the Royal Society of London for his pioneering experiments in electricity.¹⁸ This was done in a public ceremony in Philadelphia in which Denny made "very polite expressions of his esteem for me, having, as he said, been long acquainted with my character" (BF, p. 156).¹⁹ After the event, he invited Franklin to dine with him. The objective was to appeal to Franklin's weakness for flattery in an attempt to win him over to the side of Proprietors. It was during this occasion that he offered Franklin "adequate acknowledgments and recompenses" in exchange.

After dinner, when the company, as was customary at that time, were engag'd in drinking, he took me aside into another room, and acquainted me that he had been advis'd by his friends in England to cultivate a friendship with me, as one who was capable of giving him the best advice, and of contributing most effectually to the making his administration easy; that he therefore desired of all things to have a good understanding with me, and he begg'd me to be assur'd of his readiness on all occasions to render me every service that might be in his power. He said much to me, also, of the proprietor's good disposition towards the province, *and of the*

17 The city of Pittsburgh takes its name from this fort.

18 We shall see in Part III, Chapter 14, it is perhaps as a member of the Royal Society that he obtained access to the works on orthoepy written by John Wallis and John Wilkins, who were also members of this same society.

19 One wonders whether Denny had not been briefed about Franklin's weakness for flattery before leaving England. If so, the tactic did not work.

advantage it might be to us all, and to me in particular, if the opposition that had been so long continu'd to his measures was dropt, and harmony restor'd between him and the people; in effecting which, it was thought no one could be more serviceable than myself; and I might depend on adequate acknowledgments and recompenses, etc., etc. (my italics). The drinkers, a*finding we did not return immediately to the table, sent us a decanter of Madeira, which the governor made liberal use of, and in proportion became more profuse of his solicitations and promises. (Ibid.)

NB: This is one of the rare occasions in which Franklin ever used a-prefixing, which had been going out of style since the 17th century: “The drinkers, a-finding we did not return...” As we shall see, it was still in common use in the 19th-century Massachusetts as well as in the southern United States until the very recently.

Of course, Franklin writes that he refused these “recompenses” given that he was already wealthy and, more importantly, a member of the Assembly.

My answers were to this purpose: that my circumstances, thanks to God, were such as to make proprietary favours unnecessary to me; and that, being a member of the Assembly, I could not possibly accept of any; that, however, I had no personal enmity to the proprietary, and that, *whenever the public measures he propos'd should appear to be for the good of the people* (my italics), no one should espouse and forward them more zealously than myself; my past opposition having been founded on this, that the measures which had been urged were evidently intended to serve the proprietary interest, with great prejudice to that of the people... (BF, pp. 156-157)

In this context of conflict with the proprietary and the governorship, Franklin was asked by the Assembly to travel to England to petition the king in an attempt to convince him to put pressure on the Lords Proprietor, Thomas Penn and his brother Richard Penn, to assist the colonists in their defence. Both were living in England and “obstinately persisted in manacling their deputies with instructions inconsistent not only with the privileges of the people, but with the service of the crown.” The Assembly was:

resolv'd to petition the king against them, and appointed me their agent to go over to England, to present and support the petition. The Assembly and finally The House had sent up a bill to the governor, granting a sum of sixty thousand pounds for the king's use (ten thousand pounds of which was subjected to the orders of the then general, Lord Loudoun), which the governor absolutely refus'd to pass, in compliance with his instructions. (BF, pp. 157-158)

The King had further exacerbated matters by appointing Lord Loudoun (John Campbell, Fourth Earl of Loudoun) to become Captain-General and Governor of Virginia in February 1756.²⁰ One month later, he was promoted as overall

20 A county in northern Virginia still bears his name.

commander of British forces in North America. He had also been assigned the task of settling the conflict between the Governor and the anti-Proprietary faction in the Assembly of which Franklin was the key player. It rapidly became evident to all that Lord Loudoun was not the impartial player he had initially pretended to be and that he had been ordered, along Governor Denny, to take the defence of the proprietor, announcing that “he would spare none of the king’s troops for the defense of our frontiers, and that, if we did not continue to provide for that defence ourselves, they must remain expos’d to the enemy” (BF, p. 158).

If more proof were needed, this decision further convinced Franklin and his supporters that neither the Crown nor the Proprietorship had the slightest regard for the well-being and safety of their North American British subjects. Now in charge of the King’s military forces, Lord Loudoun proved to be a disastrous military commander. This further exasperated the colonials who were in desperate need of soldiers trained in frontier warfare tactics to defend their exposed western and coastal settlements.

In his *Autobiography*, Franklin laments the fact that British General Shirley, who had taken over command of the British army after General Braddock’s death, was not appointed in this capacity. Franklin believed that Shirley would have made an excellent commander. He writes “for, tho’ Shirley was not a bred soldier,” he was “sensible and sagious in himself, and attentive to good advice from others, capable of forming judicious plans, and quick and active in carrying them into execution.” On the contrary, Loudoun’s operations were as calamitous militarily as they were economically and “frivolous, expensive, and disgraceful to our nation (my italics) beyond conception” (BF, p. 161).

Loudoun, instead of defending the colonies with his great army, left them totally expos’d while he paraded idly at Halifax, by which means Fort George was lost, besides, he derang’d all our mercantile operations, and distress’d our trade, by a long embargo on the exportation of provisions, on pretence of keeping supplies from being obtain’d by the enemy, but in reality for beating down their price in favor of the contractors, in whose profits, it was said, perhaps from suspicion only, he had a share. And, when at length the embargo was taken off, by neglecting to send notice of it to Charlestown, the Carolina fleet was detain’d near three months longer, whereby their bottoms (i.e. the hulls) were so much damaged by the worm that a great part of them foundered in their passage home. (BF, p. 166)

Here, he is thinking in particular of the loss of what he calls “Fort George.” In reality, he probably means Fort Oswego, which fell in August 1756. Fort William Henry was captured by the Marquis de Montcalm’s forces in August 1757. Located on the south banks of Lake George, it was here that, despite French attempts to stop them, the Huron massacred the English prisoners of war, thus countermanding Montcalm’s orders (cf. above).

With the exacerbation of tensions between the British authorities and the colonial leadership, Franklin’s use of the possessive adjective “our” is revealing in the phrases such as “derang’d all our mercantile operations,” and “distress’d our trade” and, in particular, his remark “disgraceful to *our nation* beyond conception” appears to imply only American interests and a growing sense of “American nationhood.” If so, we have hints that a separate American identity was developing in his own mind. The extent to which this extended to a separate linguistic identity is another matter. Nevertheless, when Franklin was considering returning to Massachusetts after his run-in with Keimer, his friend Hugh Meredith “dissuaded me from returning to *my native country*.” “Country” was originally borrowed from French, meaning “administrative region,” similar to an English “shire,” that is, having a political, geographic and economic identity but also an affective dimension associated with the place where one was born and raised.

After his failure to seize Fort Louisburg from the French, Lord Loudoun was recalled to England in 1757. As we have seen, the following summer of 1758, General Abercrombie suffered severe losses attempting to capture Fort Ticonderoga also on Lake George.

Despite these exhausting military campaigns, the proprietors were still holding out and stubbornly refusing to help fund the defence of the colony, preferring to pass on these financial burdens to the people. In the face of their obstinacy, Franklin never wavered in his commitment to the Assembly battling on to force them to accept their responsibilities. It was in this capacity that he was sent by the Assembly to London, where he lobbied the Parliamentarians and men of note until the final defeat of the French in 1760.

Conclusion

The cost of transporting, equipping, feeding and supplying so many British troops during these long years was enormous not only for the Crown but also for the individual colonies who had spent considerable sums to recruit and maintain their own militia forces.

Following the French defeat, the British government considered that the colonists had not done enough to pay for the costs of the war, and a series of taxes were unilaterally imposed on them by the Crown without the consent of the colonial assemblies and legislatures. On the contrary, Franklin and the other colonial leaders believed they had already done more than their share. Further unilateral decisions, such as the passage of the Quartering Act by Parliament in 1765, obliging Americans to lodge British soldiers in their homes (with the intendent abuses this resulted in), provoked a predictable uproar on the part of the civilian population. The growing sociocultural and political schism between

the colonists and the British authorities elevated tensions to an entirely new level that had never been known prior to the arrival of the British army in 1755.

Chapter 8 focuses on Franklin's attempt to steer a middle course. On one hand, he did his utmost to convince the colonials that the royal authorities were sincerely concerned for their welfare. On the other hand, he did his best to convince the Tories that it was in the long-term interest of Great Britain and the Empire to give the Americans a voice in Parliament or, at the very least, to respect the rights of the colonial legislatures who, based on the English Bill of Rights and the original colonial charters, refused arbitrary taxation.

Seen from the British perspective, the Americans' legal arguments were unfounded and, more especially, perceived to be an outrageous challenge to the king's authority. In addition, from perspective of the Church of England, of which the king was the official head, such a challenge was felt to be a violation of the natural hierarchical order sanctioned by the Great Chain of Being and the Bible itself (cf. Romans 13:1-14 Hebrews 13:17...).

8. The Seeds of Discord: Taxation without Representation (1757-1775)

1. Franklin, an Agent for the Colonies

Contrary to the formal instructions he had received from the Proprietors before leaving England, Governor William Denny was finally persuaded by the Pennsylvania Assembly to pass a bill taxing the Penn estates as security for the printing of \$100,000 in paper money, an endeavour in which Franklin had also been heavily involved (cf. Chapter 3). In 1757, Franklin had been appointed by the Pennsylvania Assembly as a colonial agent and sent to England to convince the King's Privy Council to support the bill.

When Thomas Penn and his brother Richard got wind of this development, they petitioned the bill, claiming that the Assembly's objective was to ruin them and transform the province into a more "democratic" institution. Their fear was not completely unfounded, considering that Franklin's anti-proprietary faction in the Assembly hoped to propose that Pennsylvania should become a Royal Colony, placing it under the direct authority of the King, thereby eliminating the Proprietors altogether. But, as we shall soon see, this was not at all to the liking of the Quakers, and Franklin was to pay a political price for this suggestion.

When Franklin arrived in London in 1757, one of the first important authorities he met was Lord Grenville (Franklin spells it "Granville"), President of the Privy Council, which was composed of the closest advisors to King George II. There he encountered the same haughty condescension he had experienced on the part of Lord Loudoun, General Braddock and other high-ranking English dignitaries. According to Franklin, Grenville bluntly declared to him that:

You Americans have wrong ideas of the nature of your constitution; you contend that the king's instructions to his governors are not laws, and think yourselves at liberty to regard or disregard them at your own discretion. But those instructions are not like the pocket instructions given to a minister going abroad, for regulating his conduct in some trifling point of ceremony. They are first drawn up by judges learned in the laws; they are then considered, debated, and perhaps amended in Council, after which they are signed by the king. They are then, so far as they relate to you, the *law of the land*, for the king is the Legislator of the Colonies. (BF, p. 166)

Franklin's response provides us with a highly insightful view of the issues which would resurface twenty years later and which had been and were to be at the core of the colonists' interpretation of their lawful rights. The crux of the Americans' position was summarized by Franklin as follows:

I told his lordship this was new doctrine to me. I had always understood from our charters that our laws were to be made by our Assemblies, to be presented indeed to the king for his royal assent, but that *being once given the king could not repeal or alter them* (my italics). And as the Assemblies could not make permanent laws without his assent, *so neither could he make a law for them without theirs* (my italics). He assur'd me I was totally mistaken. I did not think so, however, and his lordship's conversation having a little alarm'd me as to what might be the sentiments of the court concerning us, I wrote it down as soon as I return'd to my lodgings.

I recollected that about 20 years before, a clause in a bill brought into Parliament by the ministry had propos'd to make the king's instructions laws in the colonies, but the clause was thrown out by *the Commons, for which we adored them as our friends and friends of liberty*, till by their conduct towards us in 1765¹ *it seem'd that they had refus'd that point of sovereignty to the king only that they might reserve it for themselves* (my italics). (BF, pp. 166-167)

In this declaration, Franklin is being falsely naïve, for he very well understood, and better than most, what the Tories' views were regarding the king's authority in matters of law. His reference to the House of Common's vote in 1765 concerns King George III's and the Parliament's unilateral imposition of the Stamp Act on the Americans, a tax which the Americans believed could not be levied without the accord of the colonial legislatures (cf. below).

Franklin's views on the subject were not recent. Writing in 1736, at thirty years of age, he gave this view on government and the English Constitution.

Government is aptly compared to architecture; if the superstructure is too heavy for the foundation the building totters, though assisted by outward props of art. But leaving it to everybody to mould the similitude according to his particular fancy, *I shall only observe that the people have made the most considerable part of the legislature in every free state*; which has been more or less so in proportion to the share they have had in the administration of affairs. *The English constitution is fixed on the strongest basis; we choose whomsoever we please for our representatives, and thus we have all the advantages of a democracy without any of its inconveniences* (my italics).

These last remarks show the degree to which the colonists' quarrel was directed oriented against the House of Lords and the Tories. By 1760, at fifty-four years of age, Franklin finally convinced the King-in-Council (the king's representatives

1 He refers here to the fact that, in this year, the House of Commons voted in favour of the Stamp Act against the will of the colonists.

in the Privy Council) to hear the grievances of the Pennsylvania Assembly regarding the Proprietors' refusal to pay their fair share of taxes. The Assembly's act, which had been approved by Governor Denny, was thus presented for ratification by the Privy Council. Of course, the Proprietors were determined to block this attempt and, to accomplish this, they directly petitioned the King-in-Council. Among this body of the king's counsellors was a certain Lord Mansfield. A hearing was scheduled in which two of the Proprietor's lawyers were requested to debate the case with two lawyers selected by Franklin.

The position adopted by the Proprietors is edifying in that they openly acknowledged that they were "held in odium" by the common people of Pennsylvania and that it was for this reason that they feared the Assembly's assessors would ruin them if the latter were given the authority to apportion taxes as they saw fit (Franklin, 1760b, "Order in Council"). Franklin and his lawyers insisted forcefully, however, that this was not at all their intent and never had been and, furthermore, that the assessors were "honest and discreet men under an oath to assess fairly and equitably" (BF, p. 169). Franklin stressed the dangers of repealing the act on account of the \$100,000 of paper money that were already in circulation. If this were done, the money would be worthless and would result in the ruin of many innocent people.

Following this exchange of views, Lord Mansfield summoned Franklin to the clerk's chamber whereupon "he asked me if I was really of opinion that no injury would be done the proprietary estate in the execution of the act. I said certainly. 'Then,' says he, 'you can have little objection to enter into an engagement to assure that point.' I answer'd, 'None at all.'"

Franklin angrily writes that the Proprietors' anxieties were founded only on their own selfishness and merely "a groundless fear of their estate being taxed too highly." With Franklin's guarantees, the law was passed and "after a full enquiry" by a commission on which friends of the proprietors participated, "they unanimously sign'd a report that they found the tax had been assess'd with perfect equity" (ibid.).

Naturally, when news got back to Pennsylvania about this success, the Assembly held Franklin in even higher esteem given that he had finally managed to convince the King's Privy Council to tax the Proprietors, whose participation "secured the credit of the paper money then spread over all the country" (BF, p. 170).

In passing, it should also be recalled that, although nearly every history book states the war against France ended in a clear British victory on the Plains of Abraham in 1760, it is rarely mentioned that the French Army routed the same British advisories a year later at the Battle of St. Foy, the bloodiest battle ever fought on Canadian soil. Had a large British fleet under the command of Admiral Boscawen not arrived at that time, it is very likely that the French would have retaken Québec.

Despite the fact that Franklin's victory over the Proprietors was merely symbolic, the latter were enraged that Governor Denny had betrayed them by passing the act and they "turned him out" threatening to sue him for "breach of instructions which he had given bond to observe." Denny, however, had powerful friends at the court and took little notice of these threats which proved baseless.

In this confrontation, we have precious evidence that the political battles in which Franklin found himself embroiled were not only political but, to repeat, deeply rooted in the rigidly marked social class conflicts of the time and driven by those in the middle of the social hierarchy, the merchant class, who sought to break down the old social barriers. Indeed, these obstructions to their advancement were being rapidly eroded by the rise of a wealthy, well- educated, middle class of merchants, artisans and businessmen like Franklin himself.

Given the modest origins of these men, when they found themselves in "polite society," their regional, rustic accents immediately identified them as belonging to the lower social orders. As we shall see in Part II (Chapters 10-14), these feelings of inferiority had very clear sociolinguistic ramifications (see also Franklin's sense of linguistic inferiority in Chapters 25, 29 and 30). This linguistic insecurity led many of them to attempt to shed their regional accents (with varying degrees of success), hence the multiplication of pronouncing dictionaries after the mid-18th century (cf. Beal, 1999, 23). Franklin was one of these men, and his RMS was one of many attempts to erase the linguistic barriers that separated the common people from the privileged gentry.

2. The Path toward Revolution

Nevertheless, this seemingly endless wrangling with the Proprietary over the finer points of this debate dragged on until 1764, when a definitive compromise similar to the one just outlined above was signed. Henceforth, the Proprietors would pay taxes but at a rate no greater than any other inhabitant of the colony. Of course, with the French and Indian Wars over and France no longer a military threat, they stood little to lose.

In the meantime, Franklin was obliged to return to Pennsylvania in 1762 to ensure the smooth operation of the post office, of which he was now the Deputy Postmaster General. In view of the fact that he had told his friends that he would soon return to London and perhaps settle down permanently in London, it was with considerable reluctance that he returned to Philadelphia.

Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, Franklin found that much had changed in the intervening five years he had been absent. Most disturbing was the social turmoil and poverty he encountered. As a result of the long years of war against France, the colonies were now in the throes of severe economic depression. This

crisis was further exacerbated by the influx of massive numbers of destitute Presbyterian Scots-Irish immigrants who had been streaming into Philadelphia during the years immediately following the Treaty of Paris. The result was intense civil and religious strife with the Quakers. Looby (1984, 16, citing Nash, 1979, 287) writes: "Never in the city's history had so many adversities torn simultaneously at the fabric of society."

During this same year, the newly crowned King George III proposed the post of Lieutenant Governor of New Jersey to Franklin's son William, perhaps in a bid to secure Franklin's fidelity and compliance or alternatively, perhaps, as a means of destabilizing him since his son was now a member of the same class as the Proprietors whom he had been fighting for decades. Having said this, William, who had spent so much time in England with his father and had been educated as a lawyer in London, was now perfectly at ease in the most affluent and influential social circles there. William's self-interest and fidelity to the King would eventually prove to be stronger than his allegiance to his father's principles (Epstein, 2017).

Shortly after his arrival in Pennsylvania, Franklin set off with his daughter Sally on a 1,780-mile (2,900 km) journey across the North American wilderness where he visited post offices across the country. This remarkable trip gave him greater insight into the regional mentalities and economies of the various colonies, knowledge which would serve him well later on.

While travelling through western Pennsylvania in 1764, he was forced to deal with an uprising by a band of hot-headed frontiersmen who were not only furious on account of the continued Indian attacks on their settlements but also because the Quakers had refused to contribute financially to their own defence. Despite the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1763) that had officially ended the French and Indian War, the Native Americans, particularly the Ottawa Tribe, had continued their assaults on the British settlements, killing many settlers. A band of Scots-Irish known as the "Paxton Boys" wrought their revenge, not against the Ottawa, but rather against the pacifist Christian Moravian Indians, killing at least twenty of them. One hundred and forty survivors fled to Philadelphia, where they sought safety. The Paxton Boys vowed to kill them all and any whites who would try to get in their way. John Penn, now the Governor and Proprietor, sent a delegation, headed by Franklin, to calm the frontiersmen down. Despite his dislike for Franklin, Penn nevertheless had a habit of calling upon him whenever there was an emergency demanding an immediate and decisive response.

Thoroughly disgusted by their conduct, Franklin described them as cold-blooded murderers (Franklin, January 30, 1764). After meeting with them he succeeded in calming Paxton Boys down. In a letter to his old friend, Dr. John Fothergill (who had assisted him with his experiments on lightning and other

projects, cf. Chapter 5), Franklin explained his own role in this way: “Think of it,” he wrote, “Your old friend was a common soldier, a counsellor, a kind of dictator, an ambassador to the country mob, and on their returning home, nobody again.”

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Franklin’s dissatisfaction with the Quakers was not secret. Nevertheless, in his war with the Proprietors, Franklin, as an immigrant from Massachusetts, must clearly have been insensitive to the fact that the Pennsylvanians, on the whole, were attached to their religious freedoms and, when Franklin began calling for the appointment of a Royal Governor to the colony, he met with fierce resistance. The powerful Quaker faction in the Assembly, fearing that a Royal Governor could transform Pennsylvania into an established Anglican colony (obliging them to tithe to the Church of England), garnered enough support to vote Franklin out of office in 1764. After losing his seat in the Assembly to a member favourable to the Proprietors, Franklin, now fifty-eight, was once again sent back to England as an agent of the colony. His wife Deborah who had always refused to accompany him to England remained at home. He would never see her again.

2.1 George III Imposes a New Round of Taxes and Laws

A constant throughout history has been that economic hardships result in social upheaval. The situation in colonial America following the bloody and costly wars against France sparked an economic depression which led to disproportionate suffering among the poorest elements of society and growing bitterness towards the motherland. Looby (1984, 29) insists on the dire social consequences and believes that it may have been during this period that Franklin began to think seriously about instituting his orthographic reform with the hope of cementing the linguistic bonds between the North American colonists. Looby, however, like most observers, believes Franklin’s model was American and, more specifically, based on his own New England English. I have argued that, on the contrary, his RMS was founded on polite London speech. This will be demonstrated in Part IV.

In the Preface he wrote for the 1765 almanac,² he alluded to the intense feeling

2 Looby is referring to the following passage. I take the last line to be typical of Franklin’s satirical style: “Taxes are of late Years greatly increased among us, and now it is said we are to be burthened with the Payment of new Duties, while our Trade is at the same time to be curtailed and restricted. I do not mention these Things by Way of Complaint, or to excite Discontent in others. I know the late Wars have increased Public Debt, which can only be discharged by Taxes and Duties; and that ’tis just and necessary, public as well as private Debts should be honestly and punctually paid. I have heard too, that some of our Trade has been illegal, hurtful to the Nation, and therefore ought to be restricted: And yet, though in most Cases, my political Faith is, that what our Superiors think best for us, is really best; nevertheless, in what relates to our Commerce with the foreign Islands, I give some Credit to the Opinion of a very intelligent Merchant, my Neighbour; who assures me, that the West-India Planters,

that was aroused among the lower classes by their disproportionate suffering in the post-war depression. They bore the brunt of increased taxes to support the public debt resulting from wartime expenditures; they had also suffered disproportionately from the new duties being imposed by Parliament and from the new restrictions on colonial trade. At the same time, the merchants whose wealth had increased fabulously during the war were building impressive new mansions, acquiring coaches and carriages from London, dressing their servants in livery, sending their sons on European tours, and imitating in other ways the elegant and expensive style of aristocratic life in England.

On March 22, 1765 the Stamp Act was passed by both Houses of Parliament. Until this time, Franklin had considered the Whigs in the House of Commons to be the Americans' natural allies, but their vote in favour of this act, as we saw earlier, came as a great disappointment and he viewed their vote as a betrayal. Knowing that it would be viewed badly in the colonies, he did all in his power to prevent its passage. Lord Grenville, however, was steadfast in his efforts to enforce the provisions of the act considering it to be an essential decision to assist in the government's efforts to pay off the debts Britain had incurred during the recent French and Indian War. To add insult to injury, Grenville obliged the colonists to pay the tax in silver and gold coins, not with the paper money that was currently in circulation. The law was to take effect in November 1765.

When this news reached the colonies, the Massachusetts House of Representatives led a collective effort to unite all of the colonies in opposing the Stamp Act. The "Stamp Act Congress," as it was called, was held in New York in October and nine of the thirteen colonies sent representatives and voted twenty-seven resolutions including Patrick Henry's "no taxation without representation" proviso. Ironically, the Stamp Act succeeded in rallying the colonists under one banner in a way that Franklin's Albany Plan had failed to do eleven years previously. Just as Franklin had explained to Lord Grenville, the Pennsylvania Assembly asserted that, by virtue of its original charter signed by Charles II in 1681, only they possessed the right to impose taxes on the people of Pennsylvania.

Far from his constituents in America, Franklin had not fully gauged the colonists' rage over this most recent tax, and it was at this point that he committed another fateful error of judgement. Believing that the passage of the act could not be blocked, he had concluded that he had to make the best of a bad situation. "Empires cost money" he said, and he promptly ordered stamps for his printing shop in Philadelphia. Franklin also realized that, as a printer, he certainly stood to earn money from this operation and he appointed his friend John Hughes as

by superior Interest at home, have procured the Restraints to be laid on that Commerce, in order to acquire to themselves the Advantage of solely supplying with their Commodities, both Britain, and her Northern Colonies, and of Course a Power of raising their Prices on both at Pleasure" (December 31, 1765, "Poor Richard Improved").

a stamp agent for the Province of Pennsylvania. In so doing, he was immediately perceived to be in league with his superiors in Parliament. The reaction was immediate and an angry mob appeared before his house in Philadelphia intent on burning it down. Upon seeing the mob, Franklin's wife, Deborah, boldly came out on the front steps carrying a loaded musket, accompanied by some armed friends, and threatened to shoot the first man who would cast a torch. The mob backed down.³ As for John Hughes, he came very close to being lynched.

Stunned by the brutality of this personal attack on his home by fellow Philadelphians, Franklin realized he had committed a huge political error and immediately strived to undo the harm to his reputation. The violence of the reaction also came as a shock to the British Parliamentarians and they soon concluded that it would be wise to backtrack. In the meantime, Franklin advised his friends to ride the wave until tempers cooled advising them that "A firm Loyalty to the Crown and faithful Adherence to the Government of this Nation will always be the wisest Course for you and I to take, whatever may be the Madness of the Populace or their blind Leaders." Once again one senses that these words were intended to placate the authorities in London, but this may also reflect his fundamental allegiance to the established order as well as his sense of "Englishness." Considering his desire to be appointed to a government post in London, his remarks were, to no small degree, self-serving.

Shortly after Franklin's return to London in April 1764, Parliament passed another law, known as the American Revenue Tax, which was a modified version of the Sugar and Molasses Act that had been passed in 1733. As it turns out, the Americans had been evading taxes by importing cheap molasses and sugar from the French Antilles which they were using to produce large quantities of rum. The First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord George Grenville tried to force the Americans to pay this tax and sent the British Navy to prohibit the smuggling and enforce customs requirements.

This was followed on May 15, 1765, by the Quartering Act, which was passed by Parliament, also with King George III's assent. As mentioned in the last chapter, large numbers of British troops were still serving in the North American colonies and, because lodgings were not always available, the Act obliged American civilians to lodge and feed British soldiers if other accommodations were unavailable. The abuses that resulted were predictable and provoked considerable outrage. Furthermore, the colonists could not understand why the British army had remained in America given that the wars against the French had ended particularly as the English Bill of Rights (Article 6) forbade the existence of a "standing army" in time of peace.

3 In a letter to his wife dated June 27, 1769, Franklin praised his wife's courage writing "The Woman deserves a good *House* that is determined to *defend* it."

The Quartering Act is at the source of the Third Amendment to the US Constitution that was passed in 1791 declaring that “No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.” Furthermore, each of the thirteen state constitutions that were to be voted into law in 1776 stipulated that “standing armies in times of peace are dangerous to liberty” and were thus illegal.

At some point after these acts were passed, Franklin received a letter from a concerned colleague advocating the idea of a union between the American colonies and Great Britain. Directly below is Franklin’s response, dated January 6, 1766. The contents of this letter are significant for two reasons. The first is that, ten and a half years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Franklin was already losing hope that a solution could be found to reconcile the Americans’ demands and the King’s authoritarian policies.

The second reason is that, at this stage, Franklin was under no illusion that the British government would ever accept a union with America, especially if it meant granting the Americans “equitable participation” in Parliament. The reason for this was simply that “one does not mix the wheat with the chaff.” Once again, it appears that Franklin was convinced that the British government viewed the Americans, on the whole, to represent the lowest elements of British society.

Sir, I have attentively perused the paper you sent me, and am of opinion, that the measure it proposes, of an union with the colonies, is a wise one; but I doubt it will hardly be thought so here, till it is too late to attempt it. The time has been, when the colonies would have esteemed it a great advantage, as well as honour to be permitted to send members to Parliament; and would have asked for that privilege, if they could have had the least hopes of obtaining it. The time is now come when they are indifferent about it, and will probably not ask it, though they might accept it if offered them; and the time will come, when they will certainly refuse it. But if such an union were now established (which methinks it highly imports this country to establish) it would probably subsist as long as Britain shall continue a nation. *This people, however, is too proud, and too much despises the Americans, to bear the thought of admitting them to such an equitable participation in the government of the whole.* (my italics) (Franklin, January 1 through December 31, 1766)⁴

4 The title of the letter is “Letter concerning the Gratitude of America and the probability and effects of an union with Great Britain; and concerning the repeal or suspension of the stamp act” [London,] January 6, 1766. Labaree (1969, note 3) discusses the possible identity of the addressee: “The passage appears with slight modifications in a letter published in the *Gazetteer*, Jan. 1, 1766, over the signature of ‘Amor Patriae,’ the *nomme de plume* of Thomas Crowley (below, p. 121 n), the London Quaker merchant who advocated Anglo-American union based on equitable American representation in Parliament. Therefore, the addressee of this letter may have been one of Crowley’s friends among the London Quakers (although his relations with his co-religionists were far from satisfactory) or among the merchants.”

This one sentence alone synthesizes Franklin's views about the social class divisions separating the American colonists and the English Tory elites. As we have seen, there was a sociolinguistic dimension to this.

Shortly after this, on February 22, Franklin was called to testify before Parliament and for four hours, he condemned the Act in no uncertain terms (Franklin to the House of Commons, 1766). When news of his energetic defence of the colonies reached America, his sullied reputation was, in one fell swoop, cleansed and all was forgiven. There can be little doubt, however, that the episode shook his faith in the wisdom and judgement of the leaders in Parliament and, especially, those of the King's advisors (cf. *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, Wood, 2005).

The reason for the desire to impose taxes on the Americans in the first place was Parliament's repeated charge that the Americans were duty-bound to pay their share of the costs of the French and Indian War. Secondly, to summarize, it was the King and Parliament, and not the colonial governments, who had the ultimate authority to impose import duties and taxes. As faithful subjects, the colonists should acquiesce and obey to pay the taxes that had been levied on them.

Franklin responded that the individual American colonies had raised, trained, equipped and paid 25,000 militiamen to fight the French and stressed that this number was equal to that of the British regular troops sent to America. In addition, the colonial inhabitants had already spent hundreds of thousands of pounds from their own treasuries and, more importantly, had paid a far higher price in blood in each of the four wars against the French and their Native American allies. In short, the American position was that they had already done their bit.

2.2 The Townshend Act

Despite his success in arguing the case against the Stamp Tax and ensuring its repeal (cf. Franklin, February 13, 1766), we have noted that Franklin was growing increasingly disillusioned with what he viewed as the British government's continued blindness to the views of its colonial subjects. In 1767, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Townsend, proposed an act that Parliament force the Americans to pay customs duties on British exports to the colonies, such as paper, glass, china, paint, and tea.

The reaction to these measures was clearly predictable. When the news of the Act reached America, it was seen as a blatant provocation by the government and sparked another wave of angry protests across the colonies. Once again, Puritan Massachusetts led the campaign to have the motion repealed. Franklin had also initially supported the Crown's right to impose unilateral import duties

on the colonies which he regarded as different from taxes. Far from America, Franklin had clearly lost touch with the sentiments of his compatriots.

Foreshadowing the conflict to come, this time Parliament was firmly determined to see this act passed into law. In a letter to his son William, Franklin concluded that either "Parliament has a power to make all laws for us, or that it has the power to make no laws for us" (Lacayo, 2010, 76). The reaction in Puritan Massachusetts was especially virulent and motions were passed by the House to rescind the Act. Led by Massachusetts, the other colonies were soon calling for its repeal. Despite the vehement protests of the colonies, during this same year, the Townshend Act was passed by Parliament. Franklin was now sixty-one.

2.3 Franklin, the Land Speculator

After the French had ceded their territory in North America in 1763, wealthy English and American businessmen, Franklin among them, saw huge opportunities in acquiring vast tracts of land in the western and northern regions that had previously been controlled by France. In 1765, Franklin was among a group of investors who acquired 20,000 acres of land in Nova Scotia.⁵ It is also in 1767 that Franklin, along with his son William and several influential English associates belonging to the Walpole Company, obtained the green light from Lord Shelburne, the secretary of state for the southern American Colonies, to obtain even larger tracts of land west of the Ohio River from the Grand Ohio Company. However, when Shelburne's department came under the control of Lord Hillsborough's office shortly afterward, the latter promptly cancelled the grants quashing any attempt for Franklin and his partners to acquire Native American lands in the western territories. Franklin's Whiggish position on the sovereignty of the colonial legislatures combined with this disagreement marked the beginning of a very personal feud between the two men. Eventually, this dual was to inevitably cripple his ambitions to obtain a high-level post in with the government in London.

Lord Hillsborough must have been cognizant of the fact that, if he had permitted the lands in the Ohio territory to be sold to speculators, it would inevitably lead to the violation of the King's October 7, 1763 Royal Proclamation which forbade British colonists from encroaching on Indian lands west of the Appalachians (cf. below). By enforcing the proclamation and blocking the establishment of new colonial settlements in the Ohio territory, he may have felt he was also avoiding a new round of Indian wars. If this was Hillsborough's motivation, he was almost certainly correct (for some remarkable insight into

5 "Not content with his share in the Nova Scotia lands granted in October 1765 to Alexander McNutt and a group of Philadelphians (above, XII, 345-50), Franklin petitioned the Privy Council in January or February 1766 for a grant in his own name for 20,000."

the seizing of the Ohio territory, cf. Heath's *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest*, 2015). Viewed in this light, Lord Hillsborough may simply have sought to reassure the Native Americans and, in that way, stop further bloodshed.

As we saw at the beginning of Chapter 7, Native American claims to their land meant little to Franklin and it is evident that he had little compunction about seizing their lands if a fortune were to be made. He had made it clear in a letter to Lord Kames in 1760 that he dreamed that all of North America would eventually come under the control of the British Empire and be settled by English people. He had also made clear in his 1760 letter to Lord Kames that he was in favour of opening Québec to English settlement and removing the French from there as well:

I am therefore by no means for restoring Canada (to the French). If we keep it, all the Country from St. Laurence to Missisipi, will in another Century be fill'd with British People; Britain itself will become vastly more populous by the immense Increase of its Commerce; the Atlantic Sea will be cover'd with your Trading Ships; and your naval Power thence continually increasing, will extend your Influence round the whole Globe, and awe the World! If the French remain in Canada, they will continually harass our Colonies by the Indians, impede if not prevent their Growth; your Progress to Greatness will at best be slow, and give room for many Accidents that may for ever prevent it. But I refrain, for I see you begin to think my Notions extravagant, and look upon them as the Ravings of a mad Prophet.

Far from being a “mad prophet,” he must have imagined these land deals would be an excellent long-term investment. Simultaneously, he certainly believed that this would establish the framework which would facilitate the expansion of British settlements and guarantee the supremacy of the British Empire worldwide. Recall his words of his essay entitled “Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind” (Franklin, 1751) in which he writes, “Thus there are suppos'd to be now upwards of One Million English Souls in North-America... This Million doubling, suppose but once in 25 Years, will in another Century be more than the *People of England*, and the greatest Number of *Englishmen* will be on this Side the Water. What an Accession of Power to the British Empire by Sea as well as Land!” Note that he speaks only of the “English.” Nothing is said about the Welsh, Scots or Irish.

As Franklin's reputation for efficient service in defence of the colony's rights and interests grew, he was named as the colonial agent for the newly formed colony of Georgia in 1768. At this point, Franklin appears to have gone through a period of depression due to his inability to reconcile the American and the English political positions regarding the limits of the power of Parliament and the King. Nevertheless, at this point he still viewed himself as both an Englishman and an American, probably in the same way that, today, people from Devonshire

or Yorkshire are attached to their home counties but also view themselves as being “English.” His dual English-American identity shines through in this letter (addressee unknown) which was published in *Gentleman’s Magazine* in November 1768, in which he writes: “I do not find that I have gained any point in either country, except that of rendering myself suspected by my impartiality; in England of being too much an American, and in America of being too much an Englishman... If any good may be done I shall rejoice; but at present I almost despair” (Franklin, November 28, 1768d). From a sociolinguistic perspective, one wonders to what degree this dual identity affected his adherence to cultivated London pronunciation.

This is a key moment in our story because, perhaps out of exasperation, and perhaps as a distraction, Franklin took some time out of his schedule during the summer of 1768 to put his ideas about his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* on paper. The outlines had been in his mind for many years. I have already mentioned that Franklin visited Watts’ Printing House in London during this year, where he met some of the printers with whom he had worked as a young man in 1725-1726 (cf. Chapter 3).

The primary purpose of his visit was most likely to ask his former colleagues to cast six new lead characters he had designed to represent specific “sounds” (proto-phonemes) for his new alphabet (thus replacing digraphs). As I have stated previously, he intended his simplified alphabet not only to make learning to read and write easier for common people with limited access to a formal education, but also to serve as a model for correct pronunciation based on cultivated London English (Chapters 25-27). This, he hoped, would have a levelling effect, both dialectally and socially, by eliminating differences in class accents.

In the context of this discussion about Franklin’s slowly shifting national identity, one of the questions I originally asked myself was whether Franklin believed the linguistic model for the English language should be based on educated London English or his own native New England English. All previous scholars who have concluded the latter. I argue, with nuances, that his RMS model was London-based.

Indeed, I have cited a passage written a year before his death in which he expresses his pleasure and nostalgia at hearing the accent and “turns of phrase” of Boston natives (cf. Chapter 30). His attachment to his own Massachusetts’ English accent is obvious here, but he did not seek to present it as a model for the people of the British Empire. On the contrary, there are a number of instances where he expresses his insecurity when speaking publicly before educated Englishmen (cf. Chapter 25). This, I hope, will help convince the reader of the importance of Part I in preparing the context for the sociolinguistic and linguistic analyses that follow (Parts II-IV).

2.4 Rescinding the Townshend Act

There were rumours circulating around this time that Franklin might be nominated as undersecretary for colonial affairs. However, this post would have placed him under the direct authority of Lord Hillsborough who had already delayed his attempts to obtain huge land grants in Nova Scotia and in the Ohio territory (Lascayo, 2010, 76). In August 1768, a month after he had posted a letter and phonetic table indicating his orthographic scheme, Franklin had an angry meeting with Hillsborough about, once again, the rights and powers of the colonial assemblies which Hillsborough was threatening to dissolve if they were not more obedient and cooperative (*ibid.*).

When the Massachusetts House of Representatives voted 92 to 16 to reject the Townshend Act and refused to rescind the circular letter they had sent to the other colonial governors requesting them to do the same, Hillsborough's wrath was unleashed. In response, he ordered that the colonial governors dissolve their assemblies. Since Massachusetts was the hotbed of the revolt, at the request of the Massachusetts' Governor Hutchinson (Murrin et al., 2013), Lord Hillsborough sent two regiments of British troops from Nova Scotia to maintain order in Boston. The arrival of British troops had the predictable consequence of galvanizing the Bostonians and Americans more generally against not only Hillsborough but also the royal authorities more generally. Two more regiments of British troops were sent from Ireland shortly afterwards.

It is perhaps not surprising that the sight of armed British soldiers patrolling their streets, not as protectors but as occupation forces, was intolerable for Bostonians, and it was only a matter of time before a confrontation would occur. This came to pass on March 5, 1770, when a violent encounter took place between a group of British soldiers and an angry mob of Bostonians. Fearing for their lives, nervous British soldiers fired on the crowd, killing five and wounding six in an action that would come to be known as the Boston Massacre.

John Adams, who was to become the second President of the United States (1797-1801), was appointed as the attorney to defend the British soldiers. Based on the testimonies gathered from eyewitnesses, he was able to demonstrate that the British troops had acted in self-defence, thus acquitting them of wilful murder.

As might be expected, their acquittal did not sit well with the local population and the British Army was viewed with increasing hostility. Memories of the condescension of British military commanders and rough treatment the Americans had suffered at their hands during the French and Indian Wars merely a decade before were still fresh in their minds. The situation was exacerbated even further when it was learned that the Governor of Massachusetts' had been placed under the direct authority of the British General commanding the British

forces. The Massachusetts' House of Representatives then declared that this was a violation not only of the English Constitution but also of the English Bill of Rights, which specified that a civil English authority should never fall under the authority of the commander of a "standing army."⁶

Paradoxically, and unbeknownst to the Bostonians, the very day of the Boston Massacre the British Parliament had repealed all of the provisions of the Townshend Act excepting the duties on tea. By maintaining these duties on tea, the Parliament sought to underline that it was Parliament's prerogative to do so, with or without the assent of the colonials. Members of Parliament believed they had gone far out of their way to placate the Americans and the New Englanders in particular; they were in for bad news.

The Massachusetts House of Representatives rejected Parliament's gesture of appeasement and maintained its firm opposition to duties on tea on the same grounds as before: Parliament did not have the authority to tax or impose duties on the colonists without their approval. In this climate of stubborn confrontation, Franklin, at sixty-four years of age, was named colonial agent for New Jersey in 1769. The following year, the Massachusetts House of Representatives appointed him as their agent to Great Britain on November 6, 1770 (Massachusetts House of Representatives to Franklin, 1770).

By 1770, it was rumoured that Augustus Henry FitzRoy, Duke of Grafton (Prime Minister, 1768-1770), might support Franklin's appointment to a government post. It may have been Grafton's idea to send him back to the colonies in a bid to simultaneously calm Franklin's militant ardour as well as also that of his supporters back home. If this was his intention, he was wrong. When news of his appointment as a colonial agent for the Massachusetts House reached England in January 1771, Franklin went to meet Lord Hillsborough at his home in London to inform him of his new post. By this time, Hillsborough had been named the director of the recently created American Department and, in an encounter reminiscent of his confrontation with Lord Grenville in 1757, at the very moment Franklin was announcing his appointment to Hillsborough, the latter is reported to have cut him off in mid-sentence, stating with "something between a smile and a sneer" that it was impossible that he should be appointed as an agent without the approval of both houses and the Governor of Massachusetts, who was of course under the direct authority of the King (Franklin, January 16, 1771). Franklin retorted that he was mistaken and, as an agent of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, he was an agent of the people of Massachusetts, not of the Governor. Once again, the fundamental point of discord was one of hierarchy, with the Crown's representatives believing

6 Article 6 of the English Bill of Rights: "That the raising or keeping of a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with consent of Parliament, is against law."

the colonists were arrogantly and unlawfully usurping the Governor and the King's rightful authority.

As seen earlier, for two years Hillsborough had blocked Franklin and his associates' attempts to acquire land grants in North America. Shortly after their stormy meeting in 1771, two of Franklin's powerful partners, Thomas and Richard Walpole, both of them nephews of the former Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, advanced their claims for the North American land grants before the Board of Trade (Lacayo, 2010, 78). Although the Board recommended against delivery of the grants, in support of Hillsborough, it concluded that the final decision lay ultimately in the hands of the King. When the matter was brought before the King's Privy Council, Hillsborough declared that if the land grants were accorded, he would resign. The Privy Council did rule in favour of the Walpoles and Franklin. Hillsborough, true to his word, promptly submitted his resignation (cf. Franklin, June 26, 1767). Nevertheless, with the rapid deterioration of relations between the colonies and Great Britain, the partners would never obtain possession of these lands.

Lord Dartmouth, with whom Franklin was on good terms, was now appointed to replace Hillsborough and Franklin must certainly have hoped that he might finally secure an imperial appointment, perhaps in Dartmouth's office, which would have allowed him to serve as a mediator as well as permanently establishing himself in London. If these were his ambitions, they were soon dashed when Franklin became involved in yet another political uproar, this time of his own making.

2.5 The Hutchinson Letters Scandal

In 1772, some private letters written by Thomas Hutchinson, Governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and Andrew Oliver, his Lieutenant Governor, came into Franklin hands. Written in the 1760s, the two men had advised that British authorities in London should impose more repressive measures on the colonists and, in particular on the Bostonians and, in this way, force them to submit to the will of the King and Parliament. In one letter, Hutchinson had expressed the request as "an abridgment of what are called English liberties..." (Lacayo, 2010, 81). In fact, it was Hutchinson who had requested that four regiments of British infantry should be sent to reestablish control over the Bostonians. Hillsborough, although certainly in favour of this action, had officially simply acquiesced.

Franklin was no doubt furious that Hutchinson should send occupation troops to his native city and it was under these conditions that, in 1772, he decided to send Hutchinson's letters to Thomas Cushing, the Massachusetts House Speaker, but under the express condition that these letters should be shown only to a

select number of “men of worth.” Not surprisingly, the letters were leaked by a member of the House and were published in the *Boston Gazette*. By mid-June 1773, their contents became known to the general public in North America. By August, Franklin’s role in the letters became known in England, provoking an uproar.

This unseemly disclosure provoked a scandal which triggered a chain of events that ultimately ruined not only Franklin’s chances of pursuing a career in London but, more importantly, also ruined his reputation as a trustworthy person. It may be that, by divulging the letters, Franklin had also hoped to deflect some of the Massachusettsans’ anger away from the Royal authorities and Parliament by demonstrating that it was their own Governor Hutchinson who had encouraged the British government’s increasingly authoritarian policies. If this hypothesis is correct, Franklin may have been trying to curry favour with British authorities at Hutchinson’s expense. In this way, he was probably hoping that Lord Dartmouth could find a pacific solution and end the conflict with the Americans in a more serene manner and simultaneously obtain the government appointment he so desired. If this was his intent, his plan backfired disastrously.

As mentioned previously, although the Townshend Act had been repealed by Parliament earlier, only the duties on tea remained in effect. In December 1773, a group of fifty militants, dressed as Native Americans, stormed one of the British ships of the East India Company, which now had a monopoly over the sale of tea, and dumped the cargo of tea in Boston Harbour. In Britain, the Parliament, which had already repealed the Townshend Act viewed this act as an outrageous and insolent provocation, which indeed it was. With British troops patrolling the streets of Boston and Massachusetts on the brink of revolt, Franklin, whatever his original intentions, was now branded by the English as a devious, unprincipled agitator.

It is in this rebellious climate that, in 1773, Franklin wrote two of his most proclaimed satirical essays: *Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One*, in which he wrote “A great Empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges.” The second was *An Edict by the King of Prussia*. In both of these he presents his sentiments in favour of the American position for greater political freedom and representation in the English Parliament (Lacayo, 2010, 81).

In this environment of deteriorating relations between the motherland and the colonies, Franklin was summoned before the King’s Privy Council in an Amphitheatre opposite Whitehall known as the “cockpit.” It is on this occasion that, on January 29, 1774, the acid-tongued Solicitor-General Alexander Wedderburn publicly ridiculed and lambasted Franklin. During this humiliating spectacle, which lasted about one hour, the attendance hooted and howled with laughter with each of Wedderburn’s acerbic jibes.

Throughout the ordeal, Franklin stood silently before his detractors without uttering a word. Considering his love of “disputing,” his supine reaction here is surprising. Standing before so many of England’s elites, it is not impossible that he may well have been shamed to the point of speechlessness, but his spirited, four-hour-long condemnation of the Stamp Act before Parliament in 1765 would argue against this.

There is some suggestion that Franklin’s lack of reaction may have been part of an act. Indeed, H. W. Brands (2000, 474-475), cites Edward Bancroft who observed the entire dressing down:

The Doctor was dressed in a full dress suit of spotted Manchester velvet and stood conspicuously erect, with the smallest movement of any part of his body. The muscles of his face had been previously composed, so as to afford a placid tranquil expression of countenance, and he did not suffer the slightest alteration of it to appear during the continuance of the speech in which he was so harshly and improperly treated. He appeared as if his features had been made of wood.

Aside from refusing to dignify his tormentors verbal attacks by attempting to defend himself, could it be that, considering his profound knowledge of scripture, his silence have been a intended for his radical Whig supporters in England and compatriots in New England and Pennsylvania? Just as Jesus had been condemned to death by a jeering crowd before Pontius Pilot, Franklin similarly refused to utter a word in his own defence. If the comparison is valid, the symbolism would certainly not have been lost back home in America.

He was oppressed and afflicted,
Yet he did not open his mouth;
He was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So he did not open his mouth.
By oppression and judgment, he was taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested? (Isaiah 53:7-8)

Franklin, like Christ, was their sacrificial lamb. Whatever the value of this analogy, present during all of this was Franklin’s archenemy, Lord Hillsborough, who must have relished every moment of this demeaning spectacle.

To add insult to injury, a day afterward, Franklin was summarily dismissed from his post as Deputy Postmaster General for North America. His public disgrace was now complete.

If one can pinpoint a single incident during which Franklin’s identity as an English-American champion of the British Empire was shaken, this was it. One wonders whether, as he left the “cockpit,” he did not see himself as an “American-English Whig.”

For a man who craved the recognition and admiration of the higher strata

of society, at a deeper psychological level, Wedderburn's insults and taunts, all uttered in the London accent he had advocated as a model for his RMS, must have echoed in his mind for months and years. As I have stated in previous chapters, one wonders whether this degrading experience may have pushed him closer to Noah Webster's dream of presenting the English spoken by New England gentlemen as America's accent of preference (more on this in Chapters 29-30).

Be that as it may, Franklin's public humiliation does not appear to have moved his son who remained at his post as Governor of New Jersey and loyally fulfilled his duties in the name of the King. Daniel Epstein (2017, 182) cites a letter by Franklin to his son William around this time in which he attacks Parliament's decision to impose "unlawful taxes" on the Americans by "an armed force" adding that Parliament should make restitution of the tens of thousands of pounds it had extorted from the colonists. Thoroughly disgusted with his son's continued support of the Tory line, he writes "But you who are a thorough courtier, see everything with government eyes." In the mouth of Franklin, there could have been no greater insult and the two would never be truly reconciled.

2.6 Franklin's Last-Ditch Attempt to keep America British

Instead of returning home to America, Franklin lingered on in London for more than a year and, during this time, wrote a number of satirical articles in which he attempted to defend himself under a series of assumed names as well as plans for a Continental Congress.

Despite his profound embarrassment and shame, he must still have hoped to keep America from seceding. In fact, Franklin had received discrete support from a few of his remaining allies and encouragement came from none other than William Pitt the Elder (Lord Chatham) who, in the summer of 1774, had contacted Franklin and pushed him to make one last attempt to keep America from breaking with the motherland.

William Pitt, as one of Britain's greatest prime ministers and a fervent Whig, was not only the architect of the policy which ultimately staved off a British defeat against the French in North America, but he also staunchly defended the American cause for political representation in the British Parliament. More especially, Pitt shared Franklin's long-term vision and fully understood America's future strategic and commercial importance for the British Empire. Recognizing the rights of the colonial legislatures and giving the Americans a voice in Parliament was a small price to pay. Had King George III agreed with this position, he would almost certainly have been adulated as an enlightened monarch rather than as a tyrant.

As remarked in the introduction to this chapter, the principles outlined in the English Bill of Rights of 1689 had taken firmer root in the colonies than in England

and it is those principles that were regularly evoked by the colonial assemblies and it was the English Bill of Rights, more than any other document, that was to become the foundation of the future government of the United States. Today this point is too often overlooked by both Britons and Americans and, as a close comparative study of the 1689 English Bill of Rights (1791) clearly demonstrates, many of the points presented in it were reproduced, often almost word for word, in the first ten Amendments to the US Constitution (1787). Its author, James Madison, later the fourth US president (1809-1817) very clearly affirmed that the English Bill of Rights was one of his primary sources of inspiration, along with John Locke's essay, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," both written in 1689. Among the common points are the right to petition, the liberty of the press, freedom of religion, the right to bear arms,⁷ restrictions on arbitrary seizure and confiscation of property, arbitrary arrest, arbitrary taxation and the banning of cruel and unusual punishment.

Convinced that his hard work in keeping North America British had been undermined by thoughtless and arrogant English politicians, William Pitt arranged for Franklin to meet Mrs. Caroline Howe in London. Showing up at her home, he was surprised to be greeted not only Mrs. Howe but also her two brothers, Admiral Richard Howe and General William Howe. This little-known meeting is remarkable in the tragic sense that it demonstrates that two key British military commanders who were to play a leading role in the coming war against the Americans, were doing their utmost to stave off needless future bloodshed. Theirs was a last-ditch effort to stem the tide of history and keep the peace.

Mrs. Caroline Howe and her brothers encouraged Franklin to come up with one last plan to reconcile Britain and America. They, as well as Pitt himself, believed that Franklin was the only man capable of preventing what was certain to be a long and bloody struggle. They desperately hoped that Franklin could make a proposal which would be acceptable to both parties (Lacayo, 2010, 84-85).

Unfortunately for Franklin, the year 1774 ended as disastrously as it had started. In December 1774, his common-law wife, Deborah Read, passed away in Philadelphia following a second debilitating stroke. Perhaps unaware of his father's secret negotiations with Pitt and the Howes, Franklin's son William wrote a reproachful letter informing his father that his dying mother had experienced great anguish that he had not deigned to be by her side when she most needed him. Here is an extract:

She told me that she never expected to see you unless you returned this winter, that she was sure that she would not live until next summer. I heartily wish you

⁷ Article 7 of the English Bill of Rights, 1689: "That the Subjects which are Protestants may have Arms for their Defence suitable to their Conditions and as allowed by Law."

had happened to have come over in the fall as I think her disappointment preyed a good deal on her spirits. (Brands, 2010, 492)

The implication was, of course, that Franklin's political ambitions were more important to him than his wife's well-being. Although there was certainly more than a little truth to this, reading between the lines, we also see the growing rift between William and himself (Epstein, 2017). As Brands (2000, 492) put it, "Having just lost his wife, he was about to lose his son. Perhaps at this time, certainly at others, he must have reflected that however competent he might be at other aspects of human life, he fell short when it came to family."

2.7 The Final Humiliation

On January 20, 1775, on the very eve of the first military confrontations between the American provincials and the British Army in Massachusetts, William Pitt delivered a powerful speech before the House of Lords in which he defended American resistance to the King and Parliament's unilateral directives. He made it clear that he believed that the roots of the American grievances lay in the English Civil War, one of the major causes having been the people's rejection of unjust taxes and the arbitrary power of the King Charles I, a staunch defender of the Divine Right of Kings. He realized that the political struggles of the earlier generations of Dissenters who had confronted the monarchy throughout the 17th century had been defended more vigorously in North America than in England itself. In short, in his view, the American position was thoroughly anchored in English historical tradition, not in any anachronistic sense of American nationalism as we understand it today.

King George II and later his son, George III, certainly had a narrower vision of the coming conflict. Like their Stuart predecessors, the idea of granting decision-making powers to low-born commoners living in the far-flung reaches of the Empire must have seemed anathema to the aristocratic cast surrounding the King. This attitude alone partly explains their hostility to men such as Franklin. The issue of "taxation without representation," coined by Patrick Henry of Virginia, was thus one of the central issues that sparked the American Revolution and it is the Crown's unyielding position which pushed many English radicals and Whigs at home to support, overtly or secretly, the Americans. William Pitt's remarks are particularly enlightening in this regard:

Resistance to your acts was necessary as it was just; and your vain declarations of the omnipotence of Parliament, and your imperious doctrines of the necessity of submission, will be found equally impotent to convince or to enslave *your fellow-subjects in America* (my italics) who feel tyranny, whether *ambitioned* by an individual part of the legislature, or the bodies who compose it, is equally intolerable to British subjects...

This resistance to your arbitrary system of taxation might have been foreseen: it was obvious, from the nature of things and of mankind; and, above all, from *the Whiggish spirit flourishing in that country* (my italics). The spirit which now resists your taxation in America, is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship-money, in England: the same spirit which called all England *on its legs*, and by *the Bill of Rights vindicated the English constitution* (my italics): the same spirit which established the great, fundamental, essential maxim of your liberties, *that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent. This glorious spirit of Whiggism animates three millions in America; who prefer poverty with liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence; and who will die in defence of their rights as men, as freemen.* (my italics) (cited in Ryerson, 2018, 363-364)

The motion was rejected by a vote of 63 to 16 but Pitt's unconditional support of the Americans provides ample evidence that the political aspirations of many British subjects on both sides of the Atlantic were firmly shared. But, having said that, just as Great Britain's own population was divided on these issues, it should also be stressed that the loyalist faction in America, mainly based in the Anglican southern colonies where the Church of England was dominant, remained a powerful force throughout the conflict.

Despite the lack of support he received during his January speech, William Pitt remained undaunted and was determined to make another try. In February 1775, he asked Franklin to accompany him while he gave one last speech to the House of Lords. While Franklin sat in the gallery, Pitt proposed one last plan for reconciliation with America to the House of Lords. After the speech, Lord Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, stood up and, fixing his gaze on Franklin as he spoke, declared that the plan had certainly not been the work of an Englishman but rather must have been devised by "one of the bitterest and most mischievous enemies this country has ever known" (ibid., 85).

Pitt retorted to Lord Sandwich's attack that he (i.e. Pitt) was indeed the author of the plan and that "Dr. Franklin" was a person whom "all of Europe holds in estimation for his knowledge and wisdom and ranks with our Newtons and Boyles; who is an honour, *not to the English nation only* (my italics), but to all of mankind" (Hale, 1848, 194). Here Pitt makes it clear that he considers Franklin to be an "Englishman." He was certainly not alone, and this sentiment must be taken into consideration when considering the sociolinguistic pendant of this discussion. Unlike Buchanan, Sheridan or Spencer, his English was probably not perceived as being "foreign."

Nevertheless, Lord Sandwich's verdict sounded the death knell of Franklin and Pitt's peace plan and, from this point on it was evident that any reconciliation between Britain and her colonies was well-nigh impossible. The die was cast.

Considering Franklin's poor social origins and his longstanding wish to be in good standing with the highest-rankling men of England, his public disgrace by Wedderburn before the Privy Council and this second shaming before the

House of Lords, before the very people with whom he sought to ingratiate himself, must have cut deep to the core of Franklin's being. It is hard to fathom the impact that these successive attacks had on Franklin's later actions and decisions. His wounded ego and sensibilities probably never healed. From this point on, there would be no reconciliation with Britain's elites. Henceforth, his total commitment could only be to America and the foundation of a new nation in which a rising class of self-made (white) men of modest origin like himself could aspire to a better future. As Lacayo (2010, 88) put it:

Still feeling the sting of his personal humiliation in London, he would prove to be one of the delegates most determined to see the colonies break away from England, an outcome many others were still unwilling to entertain.

These events also mark the beginning of the end of his relationship with his son William who, rather than resign as the King's appointed Governor of New Jersey, remained a loyalist to the end. Franklin must have considered this to be the ultimate betrayal and the two barely ever spoke again.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have observed the long, painful unravelling of what was, in fact, a fundamentally flawed relationship from the very beginning, not only between Britain and the colonies, but within the colonies themselves – with the northern and middle colonies settled by a variety of dissident sects while the southern colonies were settled by a motley assortment of Anglicans, the great majority of them wretchedly poor indentured servants, led by the younger sons of dispossessed English noblemen.

Despite all that has been said, most historians are in agreement that, even though a minority of colonists were fervent loyalists, some estimates being around 20%, the rest of the population was divided, with approximately 40% being neutral. Due to threats and intimidation, many of these may in fact have preferred to remain British. The hotbed of contestation was in Franklin's "country" of Massachusetts.

9. Franklin, the Reluctant Rebel (1775-1790)

Introduction

In late March 1775, on the very eve of the American Revolution, and only one month following William Pitt's impassioned speech to the House of Lords defending Franklin and the American cause, Franklin, bitter and downhearted, sailed home to America. He arrived in Philadelphia in early May where events followed one another in rapid succession. Greeted as a hero by most of the population, he was quickly elected as a Pennsylvania's delegate to the newly formed Continental Congress where he was placed on a committee handling secret correspondence. He was also appointed as one of the commissioners whose task it was to ensure that Canada did not side with Great Britain during the coming revolt. Finally, in direct defiance of the King's Privy Council, the Continental Congress elected Franklin as the Postmaster General of the Colonies. Considering that the Privy Council had dismissed him from his position as Deputy Postmaster General, this election actually constituted a promotion and was certainly intended to be a *pied-de-nez*, not only to his enemies in the King's Privy-Council, but also in the House of Lords.

Nevertheless, not all Americans fully trusted Franklin, and for two good reasons. The first was the fact that Franklin had for so long attempted to explain and, on occasion, even defend¹ the Crown's policies in America. Secondly was the fact that he had spent a decade in England without ever returning to America, not even after his wife had been severely stricken down by a stroke. There were those who suspected that Franklin might even be a British spy.

1. Shattered Bonds with the Motherland

Open warfare finally broke out in April 1775, the month before his arrival in Philadelphia. Seeking to seize militia weapons and ammunition that had been

1 For instance, by defending import taxes on the colonies (cf. Sugar Tax).

stored in Lexington and Concord, northwest of Boston, the British army became engaged in a running battle with the hidden militiamen losing a third of its force during their retreat back to Boston. A few months later, led by Lord Howe, the British army won a Pyrrhic victory routing the untrained, undisciplined American militia forces at the Battle of Bunker Hill. In so doing, however, they lost nearly half of the 2,500 troops engaged, a testimony to their bravery, but also a harbinger of the long years of hard fighting to come. The pride of the British army was stung and, in retaliation, the British burnt down the town of Charlestown near Boston.

It was now clear that the conflict had reached the point of no return and, at seventy, Franklin was invited to participate on a committee of five men, including Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, to prepare a Declaration of Independence. Although it was Jefferson who drafted the Declaration, Franklin reread it in minute detail, offering only a few minor improvements. Nevertheless, reading between the lines, one senses that each of the drafters of the Declaration genuinely regretted the rupture with Great Britain, realizing that, henceforth, they would be forever separated from the motherland. In this extract of the Declaration of Independence, the authors stress that, despite their common British ethnicity and culture, the fundamental reason for the Declaration was Great Britain's tyrannical sovereign and oppressive political system (cf. Chapter 6):

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our *Brittish brethren*. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them *by the ties of our common kindred* to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to *the voice of justice and of consanguinity* (my italics). We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends. (Declaration of Independence)²

Even though the Americans appealed to their common “consanguinity” and kinship with their “Brittish brethren” it is quite clear that this was not the view of the English leadership who viewed their American subjects as a socially inferior underclass and, increasingly, as an ethnically mixed “race” of English,

² Declaration of Independence, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

Welsh, Germans, Dutch, French, Swedes, Scots-Irish, and so on. In other words, no longer English at all. Having said this, the 1790 US census demonstrates the overwhelming “Englishness” of the American population, with over 90% of the New England population claiming direct English descent (cf. Chapter 12).

It was in this climate that an American national identity arose. As we shall see later, the direct consequence of this was the development of a national consciousness and, by extension, the growing awareness of an emerging American form of English. The most vocal proponent of American English was Noah Webster, who presented himself as Franklin’s successor in promoting a new revised orthography for the new American nation. He also is the first to have literally declared a “linguistic declaration of Independence” from Great Britain, “whose children we are.” Webster’s vision of this American English was radically different from what is generally imagined (cf. Chapter 12, Chapter 29 and Chapter 30).

Following the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, Franklin was nominated President of the Constitutional Committee of Pennsylvania and, as such, simultaneously presided over the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania.

By the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Americans had been at war with Great Britain for a year and a half. Lord William Howe addressed a letter to Franklin offering a full pardon to the American colonies if they would agree to return to the fold. Twenty-six days after the Declaration of Independence, Franklin sent him a blunt reply. Now the commander-in-chief of all British forces in America, Howe had personally commanded the British troops who had defeated the American militia at Bunker Hill outside of Boston. As previously stated, following this battle, the British had also burned down Charlestown (on the outskirts of Boston). At this point, despite the fact that the war was going badly for the Americans, Franklin’s attitude towards the British leadership was unyielding. The tone of his response, despite the polite formulas of the time, is one of sarcasm and bitterness, a reflection of Franklin’s despondence with a situation he regarded as senseless, tragic and unnecessary.

My Lord,

I receiv’d safe the Letters your Lordship so kindly forwarded to me, and beg you to accept my thanks. The official dispatches, to which you refer me, contain nothing more than what we had seen in the Act of Parliament, viz. Offers of Pardon upon Submission, which I was sorry to find, as it must give your Lordship Pain to be sent upon so fruitless a Business.

Directing Pardons to be offered to the Colonies, who are the very Parties injured, expresses indeed that Opinion of our Ignorance, Baseness, and Insensibility, which your uninform’d and proud Nation has long been pleased to entertain of us (my italics); but it can have no other effect than that of increasing our Resentments. It is impossible we should think of Submission to a Government, that has with the

most wanton Barbarity and Cruelty burnt our defenceless Towns in the midst of Winter, excited the Savages to massacre our Peacefull Farmers, and our Slaves to murder their Masters, and is even now bringing foreign Mercenaries to deluge our Settlements with Blood. *These atrocious Injuries have extinguished every remaining Spark of Affection for that Parent Country we once held so dear* (my italics); but, were it possible for *us* to forget and forgive them, it is not possible for *you* (I mean the British Nation) to forgive the People you have so heavily injured. You can never confide again in those as Fellow Subjects, and permit them to enjoy equal Freedom, to whom you know you have given such just Cause of lasting Enmity. And this must impel you, were we again under your Government, to endeavour the breaking our Spirit by the severest Tyranny, and obstructing, by every Means in your Power, our growing Strength and Prosperity... (Franklin to Howe, July 20, 1776)

In terms of national identity, Franklin's letter to Lord Howe stands as a personal declaration of independence, not necessarily from the people of England or its culture, but certainly from its system of government and the political philosophy espoused by its leadership.

In passing, note the use here of "*your* uninformed and proud Nation has long been pleased to entertain of *us*." Following French enunciative grammar theory,³ the use of "*your*" in this context marks what is called "differentiation" which, in effect, amounts to Franklin distancing himself from his former bonds with England. This is a big step away from his former use of "*our*" or "*my*" in reference to his adhesion to England and Great Britain. This use of "*we/our*" or "*I/my*" is what is known as "identification," the expression of direct bonds to oneself. Henceforth, "These atrocious Injuries have extinguished every remaining Spark of Affection for that Parent Country *we* once held so dear." "*We*" signals that the "operation of identification" is uniquely "American." There is a clear affective dimension to this as well (cf. Culioli, 1990; cf. Chevillet, 1991 and "affective proximity" in Glossary of Terminology).

Although this observation is obvious when pointed out, it bears mentioning nonetheless since we see here that Franklin has completely broken the ties with the nation he had formerly loved so dearly. In his mind, the break was now complete as were his former oaths of allegiance to George II and George III which were henceforth null and void (cf. Chapter 6).

In the last chapter we saw that Lord Howe, and his brother Admiral Howe, had met secretly at their sister Mrs. Howe's home to find a way to ward off an unnecessary bloody war. In this they had enjoyed the full support of the former Prime Minister, William Pitt (Lord Chatham).

Again, Chapters 29 and 30 will be devoted to examining the degree to which this political break with may have had repercussions on his views on language propriety and, in particular, the model of pronunciation American people

3 Cf. Antoine Culioli's "Théorie des opérations énonciatives."

should adopt. Could his thoughts have shifted away from advancing his London-based RMS in a way that resembled Noah Webster's blatantly nationalist views in support of a New England English model for all Americans? The evidence presented in Parts IV and V argue against this.

2. Franklin, American Minister Plenipotentiary to France

Shortly afterward, Franklin was selected to become the American commissioner to the French Court. By all accounts he was delighted with this new assignment and the opportunity to return to a nation where he could once again enjoy new intellectual encounters. Having already been honoured at Versailles for his scientific work a decade before in 1767, Franklin had met Louis XV and was already acquainted with certain members of the French court as well as French intellectuals and scientists. This time his task was of a far different nature, that is, to appeal to his son, King Louis XVI, for French military and financial support in their war against Britain. His former oaths of fidelity to the king as well as the prayers and oaths of fidelity he swore daily to God to faithfully serve the King of England and the British Empire were now all cast to the wind.

In fact, France had already been providing military assistance to the Americans thanks to the efforts of Silas Deane, an American agent whose mission was to obtain ships, munitions and money as discretely as possible for the American cause. On his arrival, Franklin teamed up with him. It is with Silas Deane that he would later write the first two drafts of the Articles of Confederation the following year, much of it based on the provisions of Franklin's own 1754 Albany Plan. It would serve as the legal foundation for the United States until the final ratification of the US Constitution in 1787.

Accompanied by his two grandsons,⁴ and after weeks at sea, Franklin arrived totally exhausted in the Breton port of Auray on December 3, 1776. Only a week after his arrival in Paris, on December 28, Franklin was received by the French Foreign Minister, Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes, Louis XVI's chief minister. Franklin pleaded with him to provide not only greater amounts of military supplies and equipment for the fledgling Continental Army but also to sign a treaty in which France would formally recognize the independence of the new American Republic.

The French were reticent, however. As a result of the French and Indian Wars in North America and the Seven Years' War in Europe, the French treasury had been drained, and they were in even greater financial straits than the British.

4 William Temple Franklin, son of William Franklin, now Governor of New Jersey and his daughter Sally's son, Benjamin Franklin Bache.

Furthermore, only a few months prior to his arrival, the British Army had inflicted a crushing defeat on George Washington's poorly trained army at the Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776 (also known as Brooklyn Heights) killing or capturing nearly 3,000 Americans. To make matters worse, the American attempt to conquer Canada had failed disastrously. With the war clearly going very badly for the Americans, the French were reluctant to commit themselves to a costly conflict with Britain which would certainly push France even further into debt and without any certitude of an American victory.

At this point, the Continental Congress sent another agent, Arthur Lee, to assist Franklin and Deane in negotiations with the French. As the war dragged on in North America, however, it became evident to the British authorities that it was proving far more costly in lives and treasure than they would ever have imagined possible.

The turning point in the war came with the Battle of Saratoga on October 7, 1777 and the surrender of a 6,000-man British Army under the command of General Burgoyne. This completely changed the geopolitical situation, making Franklin's negotiating stance far more powerful than had been the case until now. Nevertheless, despite this victory, de Vergennes was still concerned about the disastrous financial situation facing France and was not fully disposed to commit his country to another all-out war with Britain.⁵ Indeed, the British had won some victories in the southern colonies which, from a military standpoint offset the defeat at Saratoga. What is significant, however, is that, by this time, the British government was fully aware that it was involved in an insoluble quagmire with no honourable way out save through negotiations.

By November 1778, fully aware that the Americans were on the verge of concluding an alliance with the French,⁶ the British government decided to contact Franklin to negotiate a possible reconciliation in the person of their service agent Paul Wentworth. Realizing he might lose his chance to influence the course of events, de Vergennes abruptly agreed to sign an accord with the Americans. The French authorities promised to engage the French Army as well as the French navy in the war against Britain.

5 Lemay (2006) points out that Franklin developed close friendships with a number of powerful, influential people including Louis Le Veillard, Madame Brillon de Jouy (to whom he writes flirtatious letters and bagatelles), La Comtesse d'Houdetot (Jean Jacques Rousseau's mistress), and especially the widow Madame Helvétius, whose hand he asked in marriage. She refused his offer (cf. Chapter 3, Dr. de Cabanis).

6 One of the American negotiators was a spy working for the British, who informed them of the progress of Franklin's negotiations.

2.1 The Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce

The Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce were signed and approved by Louis XVI in February and in March 1778 respectively. The Treaty of Alliance stipulated that if France or the United States were attacked by Great Britain, they would engage in a common defence. Importantly, under such conditions, neither country could sign a separate peace agreement with Britain without the consent of the other. As we shall see, Franklin would later violate this agreement (cf. below).

Since the “United States” of America were considered to be separate political entities, prior to the signing of the Treaty of Alliance, Franklin had the constitutions of the thirteen colonies, now called “states,” translated into French and presented to the French king and his ministers. Until the American Civil War, Americans referred to the United States by using the plural, i.e., the “United States are.” After the southern Confederacy attempted to secede from the Union, the singular was used by the Union to emphasize its unity: the “United States is.” The French have retained the original plural usage: “Les Etats-Unis sont...” For the first time, the Great Seal of the United States appeared on this printed document.⁷ Likewise, the United States is referred to as the plural in German, *Die USA sind*.

After Silas Deane was accused of corruption, he was replaced by the austere John Adams, a devout Protestant, who was totally out of his element, not only in Catholic France but even more so at the rather decadent and lavishly extravagant French royal court. When Adams first arrived, Franklin promptly invited him to join him to the nightly meals with his aristocratic friends. Adams complained in his diary that he considered these dinners to be a distraction and he heartily disapproved of what he interpreted to be Franklin’s flamboyant lifestyle. However, Adams did not understand that, in France, social occasions such as these were also ideal occasions to discuss politics, business and to make deals as well as to share moments of pleasure and conviviality. Considering Franklin’s popularity among the French, Adams must have felt somewhat isolated and perhaps also a bit envious. Nevertheless, it is largely thanks to Franklin’s ability to mingle with the rich and famous that the United States was able to obtain money and military assistance to continue the war against Great Britain.

The Treaty of Amity and Commerce encouraged trade between the two countries. It also required an exchange of consuls and, as such, this treaty

7 Interestingly, in a letter to his daughter Sally, Franklin expresses his disgust of the eagle as a symbol for America, a bird of prey which he considered to be “cowardly, lazy, rapacious” (from Benjamin Franklin to Sarah Bache, 26 January 1784b).

recognized the American colonies, now as “states,” as independent political entities. France was thus the first nation to recognize the United States of America collectively as a fully sovereign nation.

The Treaty of Alliance is recognized as one of Franklin’s major diplomatic triumphs. One of its consequences was that the Spanish also declared war on Britain in 1779. By this time, Franklin was perhaps the best known American outside of North America, both for his scientific contributions and now as a skilful diplomat. Not surprisingly, Franklin’s diplomatic success was greatly appreciated in America and, by 1779, at the age of seventy-four, the Continental Congress gave Franklin a new title: Minister Plenipotentiary to France (“*Monsieur le Ministre Plenipotentiaire des Etats-Unis d’Amérique*”).

It is also during this same year that, thanks to the efforts of Benjamin Vaughan, a friend and great admirer of Franklin (for more, cf. Chapter 3), that the collection of Franklin’s writings was published in London under the title of *Political, Miscellaneous, and Philosophical Pieces; ... Written by Benj. Franklin, LL.D. and F.R.S. ... Now first collected, With Explanatory Plates, Notes, And an Index to the Whole* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, No 72, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1779). It is in this collection that his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* was published and read by his admirers, among them Noah Webster and Sir William Jones (cf. Chapters 29 and 30).

2.2 Franklin, the Courtesan

During his years in France, Franklin was a frequent visitor and guest at the French court where he played his role to perfection, portraying himself as an eccentric American backwoods genius. Consciously violating courtly etiquette, he sported a simple brown linen suit,⁸ wore a fur hat rather than a wig and refused to carry a sword at his side. Rather than perceiving this as an abuse of decorum, Franklin’s outlandish appearance delighted the gaudily-dressed courtesans and socialites who did not cease to flatter and adulate him. All were charmed and amused with his wit.⁹ For a man who loved flattery, this was heaven-on-earth.

Aside from doing his best to conform to the image of a European-American noble savage, Franklin’s success can also be explained in large part by his understanding of French culture and his comprehension of educated written and spoken French. His fluency must have been sufficient to carry on conversations using a wide range of registers ranging from diplomatic discourse, discussions

⁸ Although outwardly simple, it was in fact made of the highest quality cloths.

⁹ We have already seen (cf. Chapter 1) that Franklin decided to study French (as well as Spanish, Italian and Latin) at the age of twenty-seven (1733) and, by his own reckoning, was able to read the French language effortlessly in a short time. Note however, that his letters to his French counterparts were nearly always written in English.

on scientific matters to mundane chats on subjects of interest to the members of the court.

Furthermore, his remarkable religious tolerance (cf. Chapter 4) at a time when most Americans, such as John Adams, considered the Catholic faith to be heretical,¹⁰ ensured that Franklin's irreligious attitudes were perfectly in line with those of his noble French hosts. He made fast friends with many of the leading intellectuals, including the priest-hating Voltaire, who became the godfather of his grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache in 1778, blessing him with the simple words: *Dieu et liberté*. Indeed, it was pointed out in Chapter 3 that it was Franklin who inducted Voltaire into the Freemasonry a month before the latter's death, an association to which he had himself belonged since 1731.¹¹ It is Franklin who gave Voltaire's funeral oration, according to the rites of the Freemasons.

Finally, the obvious pleasure Franklin derived from flirting with the beautiful ladies of the court thoroughly amused his French friends... and disgusted the dour John Adams. His romantic flings with Madame Brillon and Madame Helvétius are well-known and he even asked for the latter's hand in marriage.¹² There can be little wonder why he described the years he spent in France as the happiest of his life.

Having said this, Franklin must have been quite the actor, because in his private writings he reveals his innermost disregard for the pretensions of the European nobility:

But the *descending honour*, to a posterity who could have no share in obtaining it, is not only groundless and absurd, but often hurtful to that posterity, since it is apt to make them proud, disdaining to be employed in useful arts, and thence falling into poverty, and all the meannesses, servility and wretchedness attending it; which is the present case with much of what is called the *Noblesse* in Europe. (Benjamin Franklin to Sarah Bache, 26 January 1784b)

John Adams was finally forced to leave France after having insulted de Vergennes on several occasions. It was de Vergennes himself who demanded that Franklin write directly to Congress to order his repatriation. Franklin complied and Adams was recalled to America by Congress on September 27, 1779.

10 Like Franklin, he must have sworn the Oath of Supremacy abjuring his belief in the Catholic faith. Cf. Lemay (2006, 323): "And I, Benjamin Franklin, do solemnly promise and declare that I from my heart abhor, detest, and renounce as impious and heretical that damnable doctrine and position that Princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope or by other authority of the See if Rome may be deposed or murdered by their subjects...."

11 Franklin had joined the Freemasons in Philadelphia in 1731 and, thanks to his many contributions, had become the Grand Master of his lodge by 1736. Franklin officiated at Voltaire's following a Masonic funeral ritual.

12 Albeit in a joking manner, claiming that her deceased husband and Deborah were now married in heaven!

2.3 Negotiating the Peace

In America, in the meantime, the war dragged on until, in 1781, the French fleet defeated the British at the Battle of the Chesapeake. Laden with supplies and troops, the mission of the British fleet had been to reinforce Lord Cornwallis, whose army was besieged by a joint French and American Army at Yorktown, Virginia. Outnumbered, outgunned and with no hope of any further aid, Cornwallis had no choice but to surrender. After years of bloody fighting and turmoil, the independence of Britain's former colonies had finally been secured.

Nevertheless, considering that he had spent years of his life in London striving to avoid the separation of the British colonies of North America and Great Britain, there can be little doubt that, in his heart of hearts, Franklin must have felt a sense of regret at having been one of the primary architects of the treaties with France which had provoked the political separation between America and Great Britain, an eventuality he had striven for over nearly two decades to prevent.

During the peace negotiations that were held in Paris leading up to Great Britain's official recognition of the United States, de Vergennes proposed a plan by which the territory of the United States should be restricted to regions east of the Appalachian Mountains, that is, to the boundaries of the thirteen colonies.

According to the Treaty of Alliance that he himself had signed with the Comte de Vergennes in 1778, America and France were prohibited from signing a separate peace agreement with Great Britain. The British, however, secretly sent word to the American delegation that, in exchange for a trade agreement, it would offer a much better deal to the Americans, granting to the United States all the territory south of Canada (the latter remained British) and north of Florida (which belonged to Spain) as far west as the Mississippi River.

Upon receiving this British proposal, Franklin then contacted his old acquaintance, the Irish-born Whig, Lord Shelburne, who, as home secretary, was now in charge of negotiations with the Americans.¹³ Franklin and John Jay, the other American negotiator, arranged a discrete meeting in Paris with their English counterpart, John Hartley, to hammer out the details.

The strategy behind Shelburne's generous terms was designed to draw the Americans away from the French and thus guarantee that, despite American independence, the commercial ties between the two countries would flourish. This secret accord, however, was signed in 1783 in complete violation of the Treaty of Alliance signed by de Vergennes and Franklin five years before. Jean Deviosse (1989, 91) explains this situation from the French point of view:

¹³ Prime Minister of Great Britain (1782-1783).

Au vrai l'Amérique anglo-saxonne se sépare de l'Angleterre, un peu comme une fille majeure qui se marie contre le gré de ses parents et quitte le foyer paternel. Elles n'en gardaient pas moins le même sang... (Deviosse, 1989, 91)

In truth, Anglo-Saxon America separated from England a little like a daughter, now an adult, who engages in a marriage against her parents' wishes and leaves the household. They nonetheless share the same blood.

Upon learning of this secret agreement, de Vergennes was heard to utter, "Les Anglais ne font pas la paix, ils l'achètent" (The English don't make peace, they purchase it) (ibid.). Insulted and betrayed by Franklin's overt violation of the Treaty of Alliance which clearly stated that no separate peace could be signed, Franklin made amends by writing what is now regarded, at least by Americans, to be a remarkably crafted diplomatic letter.¹⁴

The following year, the official treaty of the Peace of Paris was signed by Franklin and his associates and Great Britain's diplomatic representatives on September 3, 1783. As soon as the treaty document reached America, the Congress ratified it on January 14, 1784.

The sense of personal triumph at having actively participated in events of such historical magnitude must have been immense and it is in this climate of accomplishment that Franklin returned to Passy in 1784. Perhaps sensing that his time to influence world events was at an end, it was then that he decided to complete his *Autobiography*. Sadly, he would never get beyond the year 1757. It has been left to historians to piece together the rest.

3. Franklin's Final Years

In 1785, the United States government nominated Thomas Jefferson to succeed Franklin as Minister Plenipotentiary to France and, after nine years, Franklin finally left his home in Passy near Paris with a heavy heart, knowing full well that he was never to return. Thomas Jefferson wrote "When he left Passy, it seemed as if the village had lost its patriarch... The succession to Dr. Franklin at the court of France was an excellent school in humility. Upon being presented to anyone as the Minister of America, the common-place question, used in such cases was, "C'est vous, Monsieur, qui remplace [sic] le Dr Franklin?" (Chaffin, 2019).

During all of his time in France, Franklin had endeared himself to the highest circles of French society at a time when the French court was considered to be

14 "Franklin: Journal of the Peace Negotiations, 9 May [1 July 1782]," *Founders Online*, National Archives, accessed September 29, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-37-02-0201>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 291–346.]

the most refined in all of Europe. Of course, as a *ministre* of the United States, as the French called him, he never neglected the interests of the United States and defended his country well, obtaining over twenty million French *livres* for the American war effort, a fortune at the time.

The irony is that the ultimate political objective of Franklin's mission in France had been to obtain and secure French assistance for the establishment of a democratic American Republic, a system of government postulated on the elimination of a monarchical and aristocratic social order. The consequence of France's decision to commit itself to the American effort resulted in its own financial ruin, not to mention over 5,000 killed and wounded among its soldiers and seamen (Schachtman, 2017).

The American Declaration of Independence and final victory sent shock waves throughout Europe, starting in France. Just as de Vergennes had feared, France's assistance to the Americans resulted in France's economic collapse. Inspired by the American example, the common people and led by the bourgeoisie, the French underclasses rose up and launched their own Revolution, which resulted in the downfall of the aristocratic caste that had oppressed them for centuries.

The consequence was that, less than a decade after Franklin left Passy, most of the aristocratic socialites who had entertained Franklin so lavishly during his stay at the French court had either been guillotined or exiled. The Chain of Being was also broken at another level. The power of the Catholic Church was also totally crushed by the revolutionaries. Church properties (cathedrals, churches, chapels, presbyteries) were nationalized by the French state and priests were required to sign a convention expressing their allegiance to the Republic. Those who refused, *les prêtres réfractaires*, were executed or driven into exile.

3.1 The Voyage Back to Philadelphia

During this final episode of his life, Lemay (2006) provides us with interesting details informing us that Franklin was suffering unbearable pain on account of a bladder stone, which made travelling by coach to Le Havre almost impossible. Aware of this, Queen Marie Antoinette ordered her attendants to have one of her litters, borne by Spanish mules, carry him all the way to the port of Le Havre. From there he sailed to Southampton, where he met his son William. Ever the loyalist, he had chosen to make his life in England. Somewhere in his heart, Franklin must have wanted to return with him to visit his friends in London. The two had attempted reconciliation the previous year and in their final meeting in Southampton (ibid.) now resolved a few matters of inheritance. They would never see each other again.

On July 28, on his final voyage back to America, Franklin made good use of his

time at sea. With his mind as active as ever, he designed a system for improving the rigging on the vessel to increase its speed and also imagined an anchor for “holding the ship in the wind” during a storm (ibid.). It is on this crossing that he refined his study of the Gulf Stream which he had discovered previously, this time by taking temperature measurements of the sea. In this way he improved the charts he had made during his prior journeys across the Atlantic.

After a month and a half at sea, he landed in Philadelphia to a hero’s welcome on September 14, where he was met by a large cheering crowd, pealing church bells and cannons firing in salute as his ship entered the port. Less than a month later, he was elected to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania for a period of three years and the following week, on October 18, unanimously elected as the President of this Council State of Pennsylvania. It must have been a moment of sweet retribution. After so many years of fighting the proprietorship on the issue of taxes, Franklin had now been elected as the new and sole “proprietor,” the “President” of the new democratic state of Pennsylvania.¹⁵ He remained in this post until 1788 when he decided to withdraw altogether from public service. It is at this time that he made a final attempt to finish writing his *Autobiography*.

Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, Franklin moved back into the family home with his daughter Sally, her husband Richard Bache and their six children. Finding the house too small for them all, he had a large addition built to stock his 4,000 books. It is at this time that he invented a device to seize books from upper shelves, a device still used in some older libraries today.

Before leaving Passy, Franklin had been visited by Polly (Mary) Stevenson, the daughter of Mrs. Margaret Stevenson in whose Kensington home he had lived off and on for fifteen years while serving as an agent for the colonies. As I have said previously, during the years he spent in London, they were his surrogate family and, judging from the tone of the correspondence between Polly and Franklin, he was closer to her intellectually and perhaps even in terms of affection than to his own daughter, Sally. Anticipating his imminent return to Philadelphia, Franklin encouraged her to move to America with her children,¹⁶ advice that she followed. In 1786, Polly arrived in Philadelphia with her children.

It is also in 1786 that Franklin welcomed the feisty lexicographer, Noah Webster, to his home, where the two discussed their ideas for a plan to devise a new alphabet for the American people which, Franklin hoped, would be based on his RMS. The details and consequences of these meetings will be discussed in full in Chapters 29 and 30.

15 Perhaps as a symbolic gesture to mark his distance from the proprietorship, Franklin donated his entire salary to charity.

16 Her husband, a brilliant surgeon, had died a few years before this.

3.2 Franklin, the Abolitionist

Franklin's final efforts were dedicated to his condemnation of the institution of slavery and, in 1789, despite his failing health, he wrote and signed the first letter to Congress calling for its abolition.

In 1790, Franklin called once again on Congress to abolish slavery and put an end to the slave trade (two separate matters from a legal standpoint). In order to gain popular support for this measure, he wrote a scathing satirical letter less than a month before his death entitled "On the Slave-Trade" to the Editor of the *Federal Gazette* (*Federal Gazette*, March 23, 1790). The article was in response to one written by a congressman named Jackson, who had defended slavery. Many American slave-owners were in the habit of justifying slavery by citing its existence in Old Testament passages. Franklin's letter was crafted to embarrass them by demonstrating the hypocrisy and instrumentalization of Christianity for their sinister purposes and profits.

In his letter, he imagined a debate in which Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a member of the Divan of Algiers in 1687, condemned a sect of Muslims known as the Erika who were calling for the abolition of slavery in North Africa and the freeing of 50,000 Christian slaves. Ibrahim uses arguments similar to those proposed by Mr. Jackson in America.¹⁷

The month following the publication of this article, with his daughter, Sarah Bache, his grandson, Benny, and Polly Stevenson Hewson at his bedside,¹⁸ Franklin died of pleurisy on April 17, 1790 in the family home. He was buried several days later in Christ Church cemetery in Philadelphia next to his wife Deborah and his son Francis. Out of Philadelphia's population of 28,000, it is estimated that 20,000 mourners attended the funeral, the largest procession ever recorded in the city's history. These included members of the Philadelphia Philosophical Society and the College of Physicians (the first medical school in the country), both of which he had founded (cf. preceding chapter) (Isaacson, 2003, 470).

Throughout the nation, all mourned the passing of one of perhaps the most extraordinary of the Founding Fathers who, through his actions, contributed so much to the democratic foundations of the United States.

When news of his death finally reached France, the French Revolution was already underway and many of his former hosts had already become victims. Yet, Franklin was honoured there in a series of ceremonies befitting a national

17 Scholars have considered his mention of 50,000 European slaves in Algiers to be an expression of Franklin's sarcastic humour. However, in his study entitled *Christian Slaves and Muslim Masters*, Robert Davis (2003) calculated that over a million and a half Europeans (i.e. Christians) were captured and sold into slavery in the Muslim world between 1500-1800.

18 Polly died five years later at her son's home near Bristol, Pennsylvania.

hero of France and with a respect that is said to have been even more emotionally intense than in his own nation. Franklin would certainly have been moved by the recognition and respect he was shown, recognition which he had craved since his adolescence in Boston.

Conclusion to Part I

In the introduction to Chapter 1, Part I, I described the hierarchical cosmic and social structure of the Great Chain of Being as it was imagined by the early classical and Christian philosophers. We saw in Franklin's writings on metaphysics (Chapter 4) that he too imagined God to be at the summit of a vertical social structure. Despite his former deist precepts and his admiration for the rational vision of Enlightenment thinkers, he still believed the natural order of the universe, the world, and man's place in it, was part of a perfectly symmetrical and strictly regulated mechanical system (just as did Sir Isaac Newton). His study of electricity (cf. Chapter 5) was almost certainly an expression of his quest to understand God's natural laws.

Just as Plotinus (3rd century), the founder of Neoplatonism and the early Christian philosophers, Franklin, like Reverend Cotton Mather before him, imagined God as the "Father of Goodness" (cf. Chapter 4) and, although he did not deny the need for a sovereign ruler, Franklin viewed his role in a way that was very close to Thomas Aquinas' vision, namely, that it was the solemn duty of any earthly ruler to guarantee the well-being of his people by assuring the "common good" or the "commonwealth."

Recall the prayer which Franklin composed at the age of twenty-two in his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion* (1728): "That I may be loyal to my Prince, and faithful to my Country, careful for its Good, valiant in its Defence, and obedient to its Laws, abhorring Treason as much as Tyranny, Help me, O Father"...

The ideal "prince" that Franklin imagined was certainly of the same ilk as that described by Thomas Aquinas 450 years before:

If it is characteristic of virtue to render the work of a person good, it seems as if working a greater good would be characteristic of a greater virtue. This "greater good" was the work of a king. "If God acknowledges the good works of individuals, how much more must those who make a whole province rejoice in peace, who hinder violence, who serve justice, who with their laws and precepts determine what persons should do, receive human praise and be rewarded by God. (cf. Thomas Aquinas cited by Wren, 2007, 34)

James Hutson (1999, 160) describes Aquinas' political views as being based on the belief that:

- political power relies on the consent of the people;

- human beings are born to be free in the image of God (*imago Dei*);
- civilization is not constituted by force but rather by conversation and rational persuasion (cf. John Locke’s “A Letter Concerning Toleration,” 1689).¹⁹

In his discussion of this topic, Hutson (*ibid.*) cites Lord Acton, who described Aquinas as “the first Whig.” Paradoxically, considering that Aquinas was one of the Christian architects of the Great Chain of Being, his vision of this vertical hierarchical structure was arguably of a much kinder and less rigid sort than the one formulated by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities who followed him. Franklin was not opposed to the concept of a monarchy but, like Aquinas, called for a beneficent ruler whose primary objective would be the happiness and well-being of his subjects.

If we accept Hutson’s analysis, Franklin’s own principles would have tied in neatly with Aquinas’ concept of an ideal society. In the absence of such a ruler, Franklin, as a stalwart Whig, was committed to breaking down the most rigid social barriers that kept the common people in misery.

Chapter 6-9 were thus dedicated to studying how his very personal moral code and his devotion to Whig principles led him into direct confrontation with the King of England and his allies. Paradoxically, we saw how he remained passionately faithful to the British Empire and America’s role in it until 1775.

At another, more human and practical level, Franklin believed that by helping the common people to educate themselves, they would be sufficiently well armed to break the *chains* that had kept them in ignorance and poverty. He certainly must have believed that, if his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* had been properly reworked and instituted as he would have wished, it possibly could have contributed to this goal of educating the most destitute. As we shall see in Part V, it was a highly ambitious and unrealistic dream that was not to be.

19 The English Bill of Rights (1689) and John Locke’s “Letter concerning Toleration” were two major texts James Madison claimed had inspired him when he drafted the American Bill of Rights, 1791.

PART II.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

CONTEXTUALIZATION II

Introduction to Part II

Part II is composed of Chapters 10 through 15 and is designed to provide the theoretical and methodological foundations which will be implemented in Parts III and IV of this book. Chapters 10, 11 and 12 concentrate principally on the sociolinguistic, variationist and diachronic dimensions of this study which, taken together, explain my views on the principles of language change.

Chapter 10 is the continuation of the sociohistorical presentation that was broached in Chapter 1 and explores the related (socio)linguistic effects of the Great Chain of Being. The first objective of Chapters 10 through 12 is to examine how non-standard varieties of language are transmitted orally from generation to generation in largely illiterate rural communities at the beginning of the colonial period. This is in keeping with the bottom-up approach announced in Chapter 1. Considering that most of the settlers who arrived in North America during the 17th and 18th centuries had agricultural roots and had lived most of their lives in their home parishes back in Great Britain, this discussion is vital to understanding the ways their fragmented dialectal varieties evolved in a New World setting and why most of the most conservative and peripheral dialectal characteristics never took root in North America. This will be followed by a related discussion in Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 about the way these disparate varieties eventually merged to form multiple colonial koines, not simply one as is often supposed. The fundamental roles played by the ecclesiastical and secular standard varieties in forming the basis for the formal American English model are also presented.

For the first time, Chapter 13 explores and identifies some of Franklin's 16th- and 17th-century orthoepistic sources. The results are edifying. Based on the concept of one sound for one letter, it is these orthoepistic sources, starting first with Sir Thomas Smith in the 16th century, which inspired him to propose his own *Reformed Mode of Spelling*, a reform designed to simultaneously provide its users with both a pronunciation guide for "correct" English and also an orthographic system that would permit illiterate people to learn to read and write quickly.

Chapter 14 presents the sociolinguistic context in which Franklin and his contemporaries functioned. This leads to an examination of Franklin's

motivations for producing his RMS and his prescriptive notions of language propriety that were current during the 18th century, as well as the revelation of his thorough disdain for non-standard idioms that were dominant among the colonial underclasses.

Finally, Chapter 15 introduces and describes the multiple methodological approaches as well as a diachronic dimension I have assembled to permit the reconstitution of the 17th- and 18th-century phonetic inventory of New England English and other colonial varieties. When combined with the theoretical foundations examined in Chapters 10 through 12, this permits analysis of the early American and English phonological data amassed in Part III from a multidimensional perspective.

Very importantly, and to repeat, the model of investigation presented in Part II has been designed to avoid what James Milroy has called “standard ideology.” Inasmuch as this is still possible, both “vulgar” and “polite” traits of English pronunciation that have been identified by 17th- and 18th-century orthoepists are examined. As explained in my remarks about “Phonetic Notation” (in the front matter), because different 17th- and 18th-century English dialects had competing phonemic systems, I avoided phonemic notation because it implies the existence of a single phonological system for all English varieties, a concept which is patently inaccurate and can be explained by an overweening focus on the evolution of GA and RP. This approach allows the analyst to adopt a more inclusive view. This led me to present the data in broad phonetic IPA script within a context which I have termed “phonetic ranges,” that is, strings of potential allophones which, depending on the dialect, can sometimes belong to different phonemes (cf. Chapters 10-12 and 15). This, in turn, will hopefully demonstrate the cogency of the theoretical and methodological framework that has been applied here.

Thanks to this approach, the ultimate goal of Part III will be to present a mass of dialectological data that will shed light on the dialectal varieties and social registers of Franklin’s native Boston koine as he spoke it during his youth (1706-1723). This will be compared and contrasted with the proto-phonological system that he proposed in his “Reformed Mode of Spelling.” A crucial observation that will come to light is that the Boston phonological system and the one he presents in his RMS are not the same. The reasons for this will be explained in detail in Part IV, which presents an in-depth phonological study of Franklin’s RMS.

10. Social Hierarchy and Sociolinguistics: Guiding Principles

1. The Great Chain of Being: A Current Sociolinguistic Reality

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, the thread that unifies this book thematically is the vertical hierarchical structure of the Great Chain of Being and the way it is mirrored along a superior-inferior sociolinguistic axis.

This allows all speakers to evaluate, often unconsciously, their collocutor's position along this social gradient. In this respect, it could be argued that little has changed since then (Giles 1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1973c, 2007) in the sense that social and corresponding linguistic hierarchies still exist.

Demonstrations of this social axis abound in the phonetic descriptions given by English orthoepists and grammarians between the 16th and 18th centuries who constantly refer to pronunciations they qualify as either “polite” or “vulgar” with, in each case, references to the high or low status of the speaker. The orthoepists' descriptions are precious in this regard because, as I have stressed on several occasions, what is considered “vulgar” later becomes the standard in the following centuries. As William Labov demonstrated long ago (cf. below), phonetic data is particularly practical and useful in gauging the interplay between the social status of the speakers, their geolinguistic provenance and the nature and speed of diachronic change.

Although we take it for granted, from a modern sociolinguistic perspective, scholars are still analyzing language along similar vertical axis with two centres of polarity, a socially superior variety at the summit and an inferior one further down the ladder. This was the basis of Charles Ferguson's description of “diglossia,” who borrowed the term from the French *diglossie*. In his article he portrays language in analogous lines, describing Classical Arabic, the holy language of the *Koran*, as the “high language” while the Arab vernaculars are labelled as realizations of the “low language” (Ferguson, 1959). The term diglossia was normally used to refer to the varieties of the same “language,” one prestigious, the other(s) potentially stigmatized. Today, the concept has

expanded to include cases of bilingualism and multilingualism in societies in where the “language” of the socially and economically dominant speech group is not the same as the “language” or “dialect” of the lower social groups.

In his seminal article entitled “Social Stratification of /r/ in New York City Department Stores,” Labov (1966) identifies three social levels in accordance with the status of the patrons of three NYC department stores: Saks (most expensive, and thus having the highest social standing), Macy’s (middle ranking) and S. Klein (lowest ranking). In this study, he demonstrated that upper-middle-class New Yorkers, who formerly spoke with a non-rhotic variety similar to that of New England (and RP) during the 19th century, were shifting to a rhotic accent under the growing influence of General American, which had become more and more prevalent in the media (mainly radio and television at the time). Using a brilliantly simple method, he was able to calculate with considerable precision that the highest levels of rhoticity were recorded by the patrons of Saks while the lowest levels were recorded at S. Klein, frequented by the working-class New Yorkers who retained the older pronunciation while, as might be expected, the patrons of Macy’s showed a mix of the two extremes.

For the first time, he demonstrated that linguists could not only observe but measure language change in progress. This showed that language changes occur at different rates of speech according to social class. That language change can be measured, observed and studied in “real time” was a fundamental discovery that should have sparked more debate regarding the need to avoid overly rigid boundaries separating “diachronic” versus “synchronic” analyses. While I respect the need for this distinction, phonetic transcriptions of words found in conservative contemporary dialects often reveal precious clues about

- a. the phonetic evolution of a given word and
- b. the way it was pronounced in centuries past.

It is this aspect of Labov’s work which influenced my approach to researching the genesis of American English during the 17th and 18th centuries. In Chapter 15, I shall discuss this in more detail.

Influenced by Labov’s work, Peter Trudgill applied his methods in his PhD on the English of Norwich (Norfolk, England). Trudgill went further than Labov in identifying five distinct sociolinguistic levels: MMC (Middle Middle Class), LCM (Lower Middle Class), UWC (Upper Working Class), MWC (Middle Working Class) and LWC (Lower Working Class) (cf. Trudgill 1974; Chambers & Trudgill 1998). Nevertheless, a simplified view of this scheme brings us back to two broad categories, Middle Class and Lower Class, that is, modern manifestations of the medieval “mesolect” and “basilect.” Once again, these can be interpreted as manifestations of “higher” and “lower” languages.

In this study, I have adapted terminology normally employed by creolists, but

with different meanings. In this book, the *acrolect* refers to the “high language” spoken by a tiny ruling elite (both secular and ecclesiastical) while the *mesolect* is, by definition, a socially “middle” language spoken by of the artisans and bourgeois members of the merchant class. Finally, the *basilect* is the “low language,” normally stigmatized, fragmented, dialectal varieties of the poorest social strata (the English peasantry in this case). The caste-like social divisions in England were especially marked during the late ME and EME English periods. Some would argue, however, that this extreme social stratification of society continued until the advent of universal education in the 19th century. The counterculture movement of the 1960s signals the partial unravelling of this sociolinguistic power structure. We shall see in Chapter 14 that Franklin was a prescriptivist who had absolutely no esteem for the non-standard dialects of his time. It is quite remarkable that, today, those whom Bud Khleif (1978) classifies as members of the “knowledge class,” many of whose families have working-class origins, often share the very same contemptuous attitudes towards non-standard speech and thus towards non-standard speakers themselves (cf. Chapter 10 and Chapter 14). Franklin was of the same ilk!

The fact that neither Labov nor Trudgill identify an “acrolect” or “high or upper class” English may hearken back to the Middle English period when this slot was filled by Anglo-Norman French and Latin. In other words, no English acrolect has existed since the collapse of Anglo-Saxon society in the 11th century. It was the mesolect of the wealthy merchant class, chock full of French and Latin words, that finally emerged as a source for our modern standards (cf. Chapter 1, Part I; see also Chapters 11 and 12).

These examples illustrate that even recent sociolinguistic studies demonstrate the indissociable bonds between language variety and social class; or, as some French sociologists now prefer to call it, “*couches sociales*” (i.e., social “layers” or strata) is still a powerful reality of our modern world (the idea being that social “class” is no longer reflective of modern western societies).

Looby (1984, 27), in an illuminating article entitled “Phonetics and Politics: Franklin’s Alphabet as a Political Design,” makes the same point that I have previously argued in the General Introduction and Part I and that I examine in greater depth in Chapter 14, namely, that Franklin saw his RMS as a practical tool which he hoped would erase the sociolinguistic barriers that separated the social classes thereby enabling a quicker social ascension. Looby (1984, 13) writes that “Franklin conceived of the alphabet as a metaphor for society, that he took it to have not only the property of symbolizing the social order and transmitting it from generation to generation, but also the capability of modifying the social order.” Looby’s last remark ties in well with the discussions and conclusions of the previous chapters.¹

1 This is not meant as a criticism, but the title of Looby’s article is somewhat misleading given

2. Le Dû and Le Berre's Sociolinguistic Model

To achieve a better understanding of how basilectal speaking communities in England during the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period may have functioned, I have relied on elements of a theory elaborated by the work of sociolinguists, Yves Le Berre and Jean Le Dû. Their research focused on the Celtic varieties of Breton that are still spoken in the rural and maritime communities by approximately 175,000-200,000 people in western Brittany. However, to be able to speak a language and having a chance to use it in a sea of French speakers is another thing. Native speakers are generally over the age of seventy and the daily use of the language is very much on the wane. Their recent book, *Métamorphoses, trente ans de sociolinguistique à Brest: 1984-2014*, published in 2019, is a collection of some of their most important articles that have been published over the last thirty years.

Although English speakers may wonder what the pertinence of their work could possibly be for Anglistics, the nature of spoken dialect Breton is particularly pertinent to our discussion of rural English basilectal and mesolectal speaking communities between the end of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern English period. Le Dû and Le Berre's approach provides a flexible framework allowing for more nuanced interpretations of how English varieties in England may have developed over the centuries while simultaneously considering the basilectal, dialect speaking majority of the population, a topic which is generally neglected because of the lack of textual evidence.

Much of their research has focused on questions of diglossia, in this case, the rapport between the French and Latin acrolects on the one hand and what they describe as the ecclesiastical Breton standard(s) and the Breton basilectal varieties on the other.

Since the Middle Ages, this rural and maritime society has evolved within a highly conservative Catholic religious and social environment in which the vast majority of monolingual Breton speakers were, and still are, illiterate in their native language (but not in French which has been taught as a school language since 1881). A French military survey of Breton recruits conducted in 1869 revealed that only 10-20% of the young conscripts from rural western Brittany at the time were literate in French (and hardly any in their native Breton) (*Situation des conscrits sous le rapport de l'instruction*: Anonymous-b, 1869, 56-58).² The first language of these recruits was Breton. Compare this to

that the article is not a phonetic study of Franklin's RMS and Looby is not a phonetician, nor does he pretend to be. Although I disagree with some of his conclusions, globally, his article is one of the most insightful studies of Franklin's RMS.

2 For information: F. Broudic (2009) has estimated that 90% of the population of western Brittany was composed of native Breton speakers in 1900. Of these, roughly 60% were monoglots. Only 10% of the total population could speak French, mainly in urban centres. From my

Keith Wrightson (2009), who estimates that the level of literacy in 15th-century England was in the vicinity of 10%.

So, one cannot say that medieval England was in any way an uneducated society. It was educated insofar as it needed certain kinds of training, but it was a relatively unschooled society. Very few children attended any kind of formal school, probably less than 10% in the late fifteenth century. Formal schooling was reserved, then, for specific occupations at that time: clergymen, those who were going to be lawyers, some merchants who might need skills of reading and writing or even foreign languages, some craftsmen and so on. It was certainly not simply a clerical monopoly as sometimes people think. Nonetheless, it was restricted in its scope and tailored to quite specific occupational needs. (Wrightson, 2009, n.p.)

This illiteracy in Breton means that the fragmented varieties that have come down to us today are the result of natural oral transmission going back to time immemorial. The impact of the literary (i.e. ecclesiastical) language on these regional dialects has remained marginal except in the northwestern dialect of *Leon*, on which the literary language was based and, to a lesser extent, in the dialect of Vannes (*Gwenedeg*). Because the latter variety of Breton is so different from those from the other regions to the north and west, *Gwenedeg* developed its own ecclesiastical standard.³

Naturally, this comparison can only be taken so far. Breton, for instance, has never been used for administrative or educational purposes, which was not the case of English. Going back to Anglo-Saxon times, Old English possessed a very rich ecclesiastical and secular literary tradition. As seen in Chapter 1, this literary and linguistic culture was squelched by the Norman French after Hastings. The result was that Latin and Anglo-Norman French became the respective ecclesiastical and secular acrolects while Old English was relegated to a very secondary and secular role.

Until the late Middle Ages, the splintered basilects of the English peasantry were also passed down in uncontrolled contexts by an illiterate population, just as Breton was in western Brittany until recently. As we saw in Chapter 1, however, the big difference with Brittany is that the Lollard priests' promotion of English for teaching the catechism as well as Wycliffe's English translation of the Bible contained a measure of linguistic and cultural revindication and popular resistance to an occupying foreign elite. In this sense, English Christianity was

own experience, those belonging to this generation who spoke French spoke it as a second language. This recalls David Parry's comment about English speakers in West Wales when he stated that it was very difficult to tell the difference between a speaker of Welsh English from a Welsh speaker for whom English was a second language (Parry, 1999).

3 I should add that, from a technological perspective, the 19th-century material culture of Breton farmers was similar in many respects to that which existed during the late Middle Ages. Furthermore, the immaterial religious culture was also marked by its extreme archaism, Brittany being the region of France most influenced by the Catholic Counter Reformation.

far more politicized, and it is this factor that facilitated the introduction and spread of the Protestant Reformation in England. Later, the successive Biblical translations that followed contributed in an important way to the development of a national English literary standard during the 16th and 17th centuries. Of course, we have seen that this linguistic revolution was launched by Wycliffe and his Lollard supporters starting in the mid-1350s (cf. Chapter 1).

By the 15th century, the Anglo-Norman nobility had rejected French as the “high” language of the kingdom and replaced it with an English mesolectal variety that was spoken by the cultivated, higher status merchants, tradesmen and artisans in the London area. Chaucer and Caxton are representative of this rising class of Englishmen (cf. more on this below).

Since the end of the Middle Ages, Breton has remained the “low” language to this day while French, then as now, has been imposed as the “high” language, a role that has never seriously challenged. The fact is that, despite the disastrous consequences of the Norman Conquest on the Old English language and despite its social demotion, English nevertheless continued to be used as a written language even during the darkest periods of the Anglo-Norman occupation, at a level unknown in Brittany.⁴ Nevertheless, despite obvious caveats, Le Dù and Le Berre’s research on Breton basilects offers tantalizing glimpses into the nature and social function of Middle and Early Modern English micro-level dialects that certainly existed at the parish level (cf. §8.1-8.3 below). The following concepts will serve as a foundation for many of the discussions in the rest of Part II, III and IV.

2.1 Idioms and Institutions

Le Dù and Le Berre’s sociolinguistic model is founded on two interlinking concepts which they named “institution” and “idiom.” They define “institution” as “any relatively stable social structure which serves as a framework for human communication and interaction” (Le Dù & Le Berre, 2019, 97-114). As such, an institution can be markedly variable. For instance, at the micro-level, it can represent the speech of a nuclear family or that of the crew of a fishing boat (with its deck hands and captain), or farm labourers in a given parish, etc. More broadly, an institution can include networks of people interacting within a larger social entity with a similar functional role: the teaching staff of a high school or university, an army regiment, a government ministry, etc.

The members of an institution are required to adopt a specific “idiom”

4 Middle Breton is nearly exclusively limited to mystery plays and poetry of the kind common in England during the late Middle Ages. The nature of the penetration of French vocabulary in both Middle Breton and Middle English is very similar in terms of the lexical fields and also their volume.

which Le Dù and Le Berre define as “any form of speech which is judged by the members... to be an appropriate vehicle for communication and which is felt to be suitable for the functions of that particular institution. Each institution has its corresponding idiom and, conversely, no idiom can exist without a corresponding institution” (ibid.).

One of the advantages of the interrelatedness and interdependence of the concepts of “institution” and “idiom” is that, when a linguist does fieldwork, it allows him to define and describe each of these in a precise way. In this respect, Le Dù and Le Berre’s methodology is far clearer than the concept of a “speech community” which is often vague and far more difficult to define. Finally, the link between “idiom” and “institution” can be seen as complementary to Leslie and James Milroy’s notions of “cluster” and “network” (L. Milroy 1980; J. Milroy & Harris, 1980; L. Milroy, 1982; L. & J. Milroy, 1993). The pertinence of this will hopefully appear more evident as this discussion continues.

An “idiom” is thus a generic term for any form of language, whether a “variety” or “register” spoken within a given institution. In this sense, at the macro-level, it can also refer to the unified, officially sanctioned, disparitary (formal) “norm” of a nation-state (cf. below).

2.2 Paritary and Disparitary Registers

These same authors also distinguish between what they call the “paritary” and “disparitary” registers. The paritary register, they explain, is reserved for communication along a horizontal axis “between equals, people who are similar to ourselves and with whom we share intimate bonds” (Le Dù & Le Berre, 2019, 133). The advantage of this term over, say, “informal” is that the stress is on not only a sense of social equality between speakers but, even though this is not overtly expressed, also “affective proximity” (cf. Chevillet, 1991), a dimension which I feel has been sorely neglected. It is this paritary and affective register that has always been dominant in rural societies and in working-class communities more generally.

As its name suggests, the disparitary register is diametrically opposed to the former, being restricted in use to highly formal, solemn or official contexts (cf. the “norm” below). As a result, it subsumes social distance, the objective often being to highlight the social superiority of the speaker (Giles & Ogay, 2007). In Western societies at least, it is intimately associated with the written “high” form of language used by the governing elites. Le Berre writes: “A speaker’s ability to master a given register can vary tremendously; active in two registers; active in one and passive in the other. The two registers can belong to the same language or to two different languages.” In the case of both England and western Brittany, the high language was French for centuries and the low language was English

and Breton respectively. He continues by explaining that:

They [the registers] can thus be linguistically close or very distant from one another... one can master, with diverse degrees of skill, several disparitary registers of different languages or several paritary registers, but one can never use them at the same time [i.e., within the same institutions] or even with the same interlocutors. Each register possesses infinite degrees of formalization which are more or less “tense” or “lax” relative to the pole towards which they are oriented. (2019, 139, author’s translation)

For reasons explained above, paritary and disparitary registers function along the same vertical social continuum inherited from the Great Chain of Being, or as Le Dû and Le Berre put it, “following a superior/inferior social axis” (ibid., 133).

I would add that the idiolect of a given individual (which includes all the registers mastered by that individual) is based on his ability to manipulate the phonological, grammatical and lexical rules that govern the use of each register within a specific social context. Put another way, every social interaction triggers a complex but often unconscious sociolinguistically-conditioned choreography in which a given accent must meld harmoniously with the appropriate morphology, syntax and lexicon associated with a specific register. Any violation of the rules can result in embarrassing gaffes. Errors of this kind often occur with foreign language learners.⁵

Of course, one’s use of a particular register pinpoints exactly where a speaker is situated along the vertical (social) and horizontal (geographic) and affective axes (by his peers or by those above or below him socially) according to the axes discussed identified above. François Chevillet (1991, 19) expresses the interplay between these as follows:

Each individual possesses a certain degree of mastery of his language in the context of a highly complex social environment. He fits into this scheme in relation to the other members of his social group. He finds his place within a multidimensional framework where three axes intersect: a geographical axis (horizontal stratification), a social axis (vertical stratification) and an affective axis (the speaker’s place within a linguistic *network* or *cluster*). (author’s translation)

Significantly, the further one descends the social ladder, the greater the dialectal variation one encounters. For this reason, it is far easier to pinpoint the geographical place of origin of a dialect speaker at the lower end of the social spectrum than at the summit. It is for this reason that standard languages are sometimes described as “neutral” (for instance, Chevillet, 1991), a term which,

5 One example is the story of a young English translator shared with me his experience accompanying the members of a twinning committee from Cardiff during a visit of the townhall in Nantes, France. At one point, he asked mayor Ayrault: “Monsieur Le Maire, pourriez-vous nous indiquer où se trouvent *les chiottes*, s’il vous plaît?” which loosely translated is “Mr. Mayor, could you kindly tell us where the shit-house is?”

in my view, is far from being acceptable in sociolinguistic terms.

To summarize, I interpret Le Dû and Le Berre's concept of a "register" to be a level of language (paritary or disparitary) spoken by a specific social category of individuals within a particular institution. These authors recall that even paritary basilectal varieties have "registers," a view shared by Joseph Wright in his *English Dialect Grammar*, 1905, and Firth (1957), who described the concept of register as "context linked language variation." A "variety," on the other hand, is a neutral, non-judgemental synonym for "dialect" or "patois," the latter being a derogatory French term for a dialect (cf. *badume* below) (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998).

During the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, the relationship between institution and idiom was radically different in the sense that the omnipresence of the normalized prescriptive, standard models that reign today in our modern nation-states were virtually unknown. Only a fraction of the ruling classes spoke anything resembling an acrolect and, as we have seen, social interaction between those at the summit of the social pyramid and those at the bottom of this rigid caste-like social structure was limited. For hundreds of years, people have been locked into their respective institutions. This explains why regional dialects (i.e. basilects) spoken by illiterates have tended to be more conservative than acrolects (cf. Ellis, 1869; Wright, 1905; Ihalainen, 1994).-

2.3 The Norm and Ecclesiastical Standard

Le Dû and Le Berre (2019, 118-119, 228-230) call the disparitary register used by the national administrative apparatus of a modern nation-state the "norm." As such, the norm is the idiom designed for use by an all-encompassing governing institution. By definition it has a very broad range of functions subsuming the multiple smaller institutions which compose it (administration, justice, health, economy, education, defence, agriculture, etc.). It is this highly prestigious, comprehensive model that is codified and taught in the schools and that serves as a secular literary standard for all formally educated members of society, a fact which only enhances its standing. In historical terms, the concept of the norm is relatively recent. Note that the idioms serving in an institution composed of lawyers, is entirely different from one composed accountants or military strategists, etc. Variability is thus potentially enormous in various institutions of that norm.

This norm thus results from what might be considered to be the last stage of "standardization" which Trudgill (2011) sees as "a process comprising three separate stages: the first is "language determination," that is, "the decisions which have to be taken concerning the selection of particular languages or varieties of language for particular purposes in the society or nation in question."

The second is “‘codification’, the process whereby a language variety acquires a publicly recognised and fixed form.” Here I would say this stage corresponds to the late 18th and, especially, the 19th and 20th centuries. Trudgill goes on to say that “The results of codification are usually enshrined in dictionaries and grammar books.” Finally, the third stage is “stabilization,” the “process whereby a formerly diffuse variety... undergoes focussing and takes on a more fixed and stable form” (Trudgill, 2011, 1; also see Hudson, 1991, 32-34). This last stage was far from being achieved in Franklin’s time and, as we shall see in the coming chapters that this “fixed and stable form” is, even today, only ever mastered by a relatively small number of formally educated members of society. I would add that while one can have a firm grasp of grammar, adopting a prestigious accent is a much more difficult and subtle challenge for most people and it has estimated that only 3% of the English population uses the RP accent naturally (Trudgill 1974, 3).

In the Breton context, Le Dù and Le Berre call the “disparitary register” used by the ecclesiastical the “standard.” For our purposes, I prefer to call it the “ecclesiastical standard.” In the case of England, the ecclesiastical standard was the idiom cultivated and taught by the clergy within the institution of the Catholic Church and, later, the Anglican and dissident churches. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, unlike Catholic France where interpretation of the scripture was largely limited to the clergy, the successive translations of the Bible, combined with the rapid spread of literacy in Protestant nations, had a powerful social and linguistic impact in spreading Protestant religious thought to *all* levels of English society. At another level, the ecclesiastical language, both written and oral, played an important role in the establishment, refinement and definition of the developing a secular English “norm.”

One of the advantages of Le Dù and Le Berre’s sociolinguistic framework is that it permits the linguist to identify multiple shades of linguistic variation within a given institution but also the social level of each individual within it.

2.4 “Badumes” and Basilects

Since the advent of Christianity in Western Europe and the eventual establishment of Roman Catholicism in England during the Middle Ages, the institution which was the most central to the lives of the rural and maritime labouring classes was the parish, in which even the most mundane aspects of the lives of the peasantry were regulated according to clearly defined social and cultural codes of behaviour that were sanctioned and the imposed by the Catholic clergy, at the head of which was the parish priest. In England, this system remained relatively intact until 1534, only one hundred years before the settlement of British North America.

The idioms that developed within the institution of the parish are what Le Dû and Le Berre called *badumes*,⁶ which they define as uniquely oral, extremely variable and highly stigmatized varieties of language. On account of their association with a specific geographic area, they are quite easily identified by other *badume* speakers, who can generally identify the speaker's parish of origin. For many it was virtually a game between speakers of different parishes to tease each other about their respective accents and modes of speech. The pronunciation of a single word could easily betray his place of origin (cf. German 1984, 2007, 2018, 2020a, 2023). In western Brittany, this competence is now on the wane as the oldest speakers born in a monolingual Breton-speaking culture pass away.

The term *badume* is close in meaning to “basilect” but has the advantage of embracing the notion of the “paritary” register which is, in turn, linked to the affective axis defined above, that is, the idiom that one uses spontaneously and naturally with those with whom one shares not only the closest social bonds relations but also affective bonds. In that sense it can generate sentiments which encompass Labov's concept of “covert prestige” and expressions of social solidarity and belonging (Labov, 1966).

These points are significant for our study. For centuries, each parish in England had its own paritary *badumes* that were easily recognizable to speakers from the adjoining parishes and regions. Because these *badumes* were so closely associated with “lowe men” mentioned by Robert of Gloucester (Chapter 1), little trace of their speech has survived today simply because they were never deemed worthy of serving as a written medium. The same is generally true today of stigmatized dialects anywhere. If 19th- and 20th-century dialectologists had not undertaken their monumental fieldwork collections, what trace would we have of the speech of these former modes of speech today? In the eyes of “heie men,” these varieties were and still are the least reputable forms of language in the speech community and should simply be eliminated. Incidentally, this was precisely Franklin's view (cf. Chapter 14).

Very importantly, and tragically, these *badumes* are generally viewed by the speakers themselves in the same negative manner. Once again, this is due to the fact that, historically, low social status individuals have tended to speak stigmatized *badume* idioms. The link here is perfectly symmetrical and, from a sociolinguistic perspective, has always existed and still does today.

Because the term *badume* is unknown to English sociolinguists, I shall revert to the use of “basilect” in this book, but with the “affective” and “paritary” meaning *badume* implies.

6 *Badume* means “around here” or “here at home” in vernacular Cornouaillais and Tregorrois Breton dialects.

In Brittany, the social and religious importance of the parish in rural communities remained dominant until the early 20th century. Jean Le Dû, a native Breton speaker, was born in such a parish community in the northwestern Brittany (Tregor) in 1938 and describes life as experienced by his elders in the following manner:

Outside of this framework (i.e., of the parish), nearly everything was unknown. Only a few important people outside of their world could be identified: the King (known to them only through folktales), the bishop, who passed from time to time for the confirmation of the children. All others were perceived as adversaries such as the landlords – noblemen or merchants... For centuries, their idioms developed in this strictly confined environment. The maritime communities were no different and we observe a similar micro-vision of society: For the fisherman, his family and crew and the port were the only institutions they really knew well. And even when they were at sea, the worlds they visited were defined only with reference to (or in opposition to) the environment with which they were most familiar and which made sense to them. (2019, 201-202, author's translation)

Their varieties or basilects, he goes on, were restricted to that environment and the “here and now.” What Le Dû says for Breton was probably true for the English basilect speakers in the parishes and shires of England well into Early Modern period and can be seen in this light:

The other forms of Breton they heard were spoken by the priest, the local nobleman, the *notaire*, the school master – mixed with Latin and French – or the forms of Breton spoken by the horse merchants, peddlers, ragmen, travelling craftsmen (coal merchants, knife grinders...) and peasants from neighbouring cantons were simply viewed as “funny-sounding” or even “ridiculous.” Since they mistrusted all people from the outside, their manner of speech sparked neither curiosity nor sympathy. It is this vision which still dominates the linguistic consciousness of “natural” Breton speakers whose discourse is often judged [by prescriptivists] to be “poor,” “imprecise.” These speakers have no critical or historical perception of their daily use of the language. (2019, 202, author's translation)

From the Middle Ages until the 18th century, the majority of the English population was also illiterate and largely bound to the soil they tilled throughout their lives. The 1790 census shows, for instance, that 90% of the American population were farmers. Webster makes a point of this, stressing the “Saxon” nature of their speech which, he claimed, was largely devoid of Latinisms (1789). Although this is a vast exaggeration and is tainted by the Romantic ideology of the late 18th and 19th centuries, there is truth to his claim in the sense that the quantity of Latinate words is far greater in disparitary texts than in paritary *badumes*. Ironically, in this sense, the former prestige of the Anglo-Norman and Latin languages following the Norman Conquest can still be felt today when one measures the percentage of Latinate vocabulary in, say, a government declaration on one hand and the discourse of an eighty-year-old Devonshire farmer recorded during the 1950s.

Despite Great Britain's rise as the world's foremost military and industrial power during the 16th and 17th centuries, the parish remained the institution which conditioned the development of the English *badumes*, where the English peasantry continued to speak their "broad" local varieties of English until the early 20th century. The working-class urban varieties that expanded in Britain during the 19th century were often hybrid fusions of the rural basilects spoken in the surrounding districts. Again, their survival until the present day is a direct consequence of the hierarchical barriers that have characterized British society until recent times.

3. The Development of Interdialects

In John of Trevisa's *Polychronicon* (1387), he writes that the varieties of English that were most readily understood respectively by speakers from the North of England and speakers from the South was that of Mercia, corresponding roughly to the modern Midlands of England:

... the west men of Englonde sownde and acorde more with the men of the este of that londe as vnder the same clyme of heuyn, then the men of the northe with with men of the sowthe. Wherefore hit is that Englishe men of the Marches of the mydelle partes of Englonde, takege as by participacion the nature of both extremities, vnderstonde the langages collateralle arthike and anthartike better then the extremities vnderstonde theyme selfe togeder.... (quoted in Algeo, 1982, 167)

In this sense, these varieties of Middle England were the natural choice for the nascent English standard language given that, based on their intermediate position on the geographical continuum (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998, 6-8), these varieties were perceived to be comparatively "neutral" from the outset. However, this did not prohibit speakers from adopting or mixing southern and northern, morphological and grammatical features in the developing standard and, indeed, this took place at several levels and is clearly evident in the Modern English standards.⁷

Considering that London was the commercial, administrative and political powerhouse for the entire kingdom, the East Midlands had, comparatively speaking, the greatest chance of influencing the development of the emerging secular and ecclesiastical standards than any other region of England. It is for this reason that, more than any other region, the ecclesiastical and secular standards that arose here came to serve as a model for the entire kingdom. How well it was assimilated by speakers from other regions is another matter.

7 The same is true of central Cornouaillais and central Tregorrois dialects of Breton, which are far more easily understood by both Leonais and Vannetais speakers. The latter, situated to the northwest and southeast respectively, have considerable difficulty understanding each other.

In his article, “Metropolitan Values: Migration, Mobility and Cultural Norms, London 1100-1700,” Derek Keene (2001) shows that English tradesmen and merchants (cattle merchants, drapers, dyers, weavers, wool merchants...) had been coming and going to the same market towns for generations. We must imagine that each of these tradesmen belonged to corresponding institutions having their own regional and institutional idioms. All of these people were basilectal dialect speakers who would travel to the large towns of England. Some of the more mobile and literate of these ventured farther afield to the continent, all of them speaking their respective idioms.

Keene points out that London’s total population between 1300 and 1500 was only 2% of the population of all of England. By 1600, only 7.6% of the English population lived in towns of over 10,000 people. However, by 1700 a full 10% of the English population lived in London itself (Keene, 2001, 97).

The rise in power and wealth of London was spectacular between 1300 and 1700. Where in the 14th century, London provided the government with 2% of its revenue, by 1520 it had risen to 12%, and over 50% by 1660. During the course of the 13th century, London’s share of exports to the continent had doubled to 35%. Between the 15th and late 16th century, it had soared from 60% to nearly 90%. A consequence of the rise of provincial ports around the kingdom, London still dominated international trade with 80% imports and 70% exports (*ibid.*).

All this to say that where money and political power are concentrated, so are complex social and economic structures and, of course, linguistic interaction within the context of the multiple “institutions.” Merchants in the provinces whose commerce depended on trade with London brought their own linguistic particularities with them. Then as now, London society was a multicultural, multilingual and multidialectal cauldron.

Unfortunately, we are unlikely to be able to reconstruct London’s immigration field for any other period significantly earlier than that around 1300, which was one in which important changes in London pronunciation (or scribal renderings of it) were already taking place. It is clear, however, that in considering the forces which may have influenced linguistic change should be given to possible differences in the effects of contacts between London and its hinterlands as indicated by the evidence for migration, commercial contact and population density. Moreover, the connection between metropolitan and provincial labour markets was probably a crucial element in the equation. (Keene, 2001, 108)

Furthermore, the rapid rise of literacy that accompanied the spread of Protestantism in England during the 16th and 17th centuries should also be taken into account. Literacy automatically implied conforming to a linguistic model, the assimilation of which had a considerable impact on dialect levelling, but necessarily in terms of phonology (cf. Chapters 11 and 12).

Indeed, despite London’s immense wealth, prestige and concentration of

economic and political power, during the period between 1500-1700, 90% of the population lived elsewhere in the kingdom and the vast majority was still tied to the land in one way or another. The latter retained their local paritary *badumes*/basilects as they always had. In this sense, the city of London's influence in this process of standardization, although considerable, should not be overly exaggerated. Incomers flowed continuously into the capital not only from the home counties but also from distant regions to the north, west and south.

Regional vernacular interdialects which developed out of these multifarious sociolinguistic institutions were largely dependent on code-switching, a phenomenon which can be viewed as a form of linguistic compromise or accommodation (Giles & Ogay, 2007). These partially levelled idioms probably contributed to the clergy's efforts to elaborate oral and written ecclesiastical standards in each region, the idea being that this linguistic melding would guarantee that their sermons would be understood in the more rural districts of England (cf. Gruffydd Jones' testimony below).

The point here is that, long before the settlement of North America, English speakers throughout the United Kingdom, particularly around the market towns, possessed their own interdialectal communication strategies based on their practical social and economic needs. These idioms were based on language accommodation and ensuring efficient commercial dealings and interpersonal interaction (cf. Giles & Ogay, 2007).

4. The Rise of an Ecclesiastical Standard

We saw in Chapter 1, that the development of a late medieval ecclesiastical standard (defined above) arose out of a rebellion by English Lollard priests founded on an early form of "liberation theology" in which the English language played a powerful symbolic role. The English ecclesiastical standard itself arose out of the English-speaking clergy's desire to create an elevated idiom to communicate the word of God, in other words, a new literary, disparitary register for the purpose of delivering their sermons, reciting prayers, conducting rituals and singing hymns. The problem they faced was to create a model which would be regarded as sophisticated, solemn and elegant enough to convey abstract religious concepts and yet be comprehensible to their basilect-speaking congregations. The clergy were assisted in this task by the fact that England had conserved a rich secular Middle English literary language even during the darkest hours of the Anglo-Norman occupation.

Until the 14th century, the principal disparitary idiom for liturgical purposes within the institution of the Roman Catholic Church was Latin. The only authorized Bible translations were revised editions of the Latin Vulgate ordered by Pope Damasus in 382. Indeed, in France Latin remained the official language

of the Church until Vatican II (1962) decreed the use of the vernacular languages for this purpose.⁸

The obvious problem for Catholics was that, for centuries, Latin and thus the church teachings were largely inaccessible to the monolingual, basilect-speaking parishioners in Catholic countries. David Jasper and Jeremy Smith (2019) state that, until the 14th century, when the priest would recite the Latin *Paternoster*, the laity was expected to recognize only one word in the Lord's prayer, namely, "*temptacionem*," at which point they were expected to repeat the word aloud:

bot answe're at *temptacionem*

set libera nos a malo, amen.

hit were no need þe þis to *ken,

for who *con not þis are *lewed men.

But respond to *temptacionem*

and deliver us from evil, amen.

There was no need to *know this,

For those who *know not this are *ignorant men.

4.1 The *Lay Folks' Catechism*

In their study of the mid-14th century *Lay Folks' Catechism* (also known as the *Sermon of John Gaytryge*), David Jasper and Jeremy Smith (2019, 9) point out that the English-speaking congregations of the 14th century were taught to repeat the *Paternoster*, *Ave* and *Credo* in Latin and, occasionally, were provided with English translations for memorization.⁹ There were also rhyming prayers to be memorized and recited internally – *sayande þus in þi mynde* ("saying it thus in thy mind"). This last phrase is revelatory in the sense that it demonstrates that the English *badume* speakers were expected to memorize prayers, passages of the catechism as well as hymns which had been composed in a more disparitary register of English. This undoubtedly had an effect of leading speakers to recognize, even unconsciously, that although their own paritary *badume*/basilect speech remained the "lowe" language, a "higher" ecclesiastical brand of English was arising at this time. In the minds of a medieval peasant population, the fact that the English-language prayers and, later, the Bible itself, existed in writing was in itself quite an inspiring event.

8 Nevertheless, there were several French translations of the Bible that preceded Wycliffe's 1381 English Bible, the first being Jean le Bon's incomplete translation conducted at University of Paris, 1226-1250. Another translation, known as *La Bible de Charles V*, was undertaken in 1377 by Raoul de Presles and commissioned, as the name suggests, by King Charles V of France. Could this work have inspired the Lollards to do the same?

9 My oldest Breton informants (born between, 1890 and 1910) also were also obliged to memorize and recite these Latin prayers by heart of which they did not understand a single word. In defence of this practice, some explained that it added a flavour of mystery to Christianity.

During the mid-14th century an attempt was made by the Archbishop of York, John de Thoresby (originally from Lincolnshire), who wrote a Latin language text for this purpose of instructing the common people. In 1357, he met with a monk of St Mary's Benedictine Abbey in York by the name of John Gaytryge (or John de Traystek?) who translated or, more accurately, adapted the Archbishop's Latin-language text into Middle English and composed it in "rude verse." Although both documents were originally intended for priests to teach scripture to their flocks in Yorkshire, manuscripts of Gaytryge's catechism were copied and adapted in various areas of England, as far south as Sussex. For this reason, it could be argued that the *Lay Folks' Catechism* as it was known, provides an example of the development of a nascent English ecclesiastical standard.

This English catechism is significant because it presaged the later Protestant doctrine which encouraged vernacular speaking English men and women to gain a personal knowledge of scripture necessary for the own salvation. By placing this responsibility squarely on their shoulders, this gave Englishmen, for the first time since the Norman Conquest, direct access to English-language religious instruction. Furthermore, in the process, it was written in a register of their language that was generally perceived to be "higher" than their own. Jasper and Smith come to the same conclusion, asserting that John de Gaytryge's *Lay Folks' Catechism* "played an important part in establishing English as equal in status to Latin or Anglo-Norman French, and therefore suitable for the transmission of pastoral works to all Christians" (ibid.).

The fact that the developing standard of English could be used to communicate with God himself gave this liturgical register a quasi-spiritual dimension which it had until very recently.¹⁰ The ecclesiastical standard register and its secular equivalent shared many grammatical characteristics. These two disparitary registers were generally associated with unity, order, precision and, by extension, values such as perfection, intellect, truth... and were only spoken and written by those at the summit of the social pyramid. For the first time, thanks to these English-language prayers, hymns and sermons, the common people now had access to an elevated register of their language.

The multiple paritary registers spoken at the bottom of the human Chain of Being, the *badumes* or basilects, were characterized by disunity, fragmentation and, consequently, chaos, disorder, ignorance, lack of precision, ignorance, falsehood... characteristics often associated with Satan himself.

As we saw in Chapter 1, this was one of John Wycliffe's objectives in translating the Bible into English. The following extract is taken from the introduction of Gaytryge's text and clearly explains the context in which it was composed. It

10 My personal sentiment, however, is that, for the older generation, born just after World War II, the King James Bible provided a sense of conservative linguistic elegance that has since been lost with all the new translations.

also demonstrates that the priests expected the laity to teach these religious lessons to their own children (Powell, 1994), another step towards rendering the population responsible for the salvation of their souls.

The lawe and the *lore to knawe god all-mighten,	*teaching
That principali may be shewed in this sex thinges:	
In the fourtene poyntes that falles to the trouthe,	*Points of belief
In the ten comandementez that god has gyven us,	
In the seuen Sacrementz that er in hali kirke	
And he comandes and biddes in al that he may,	
That all that haues kepyng or cure undir him	
Enioygne thair parochiens and thaire *sugettes,	*parishoners; subjects
That thai here and *lere this ilk sex thinges,	*learn
And oft sithes reherce tham til that thai *kun thaime,	*know
<i>And sithen teche tham thair childir, if thai any haue...</i>	
(my italics)	

The last line of this text is particularly telling. Henceforth, the ecclesiastical standard was progressively introduced into the institution of the nuclear family and, as we see here, the duty of parents was to educate their children in matters of religion via a standardized variety of ecclesiastical English. This was also accomplished via prayers and hymns. Prior to this, the only idiom used by the family in the lower orders of society had been the basilects/*badumes*.

4.2 The Laws of Pleading and Wycliffe's English Bible

During the first half of the 14th century, the kings of England were seen as Anglo-Norman "French" (cf. Robert of Gloucester's testimony in Chapter 1). The creation of an English disparitary ecclesiastical standard had immense symbolic power. The Laws of Pleading enacted by Edward III in 1362, by which magistrates were ordered to plead their cases in English (as opposed to French) was, in addition to being a practical measure, almost certainly a response by the King to appease his English-speaking subjects. Nevertheless, as we have seen, it was John Wycliffe's 1381 translation of the Bible into an elegant, uniform, disparitary register of Middle English that was to have the greatest long-term impact. As was expressed above, these linguistic events had the effect of firmly establishing a formal literary register of English language on a par with French and Latin.

There can be little doubt that Wycliffe and his fellow Lollards understood

very well the extent to which this enhanced linguistic status of English would empower the common people by granting them direct access to scripture. Considering the medieval context, this was quite a remarkable advancement, and successive generations of common Englishmen came to associate literacy with spiritual, social and political freedom.

This development cannot be underestimated. It represented an enormous step forward in giving the common people of England a practical and sacrosanct means of exercising their freedom of conscience, a freedom that was largely absent in Catholic France. At least in private, it further armed the people with the intellectual tools that would allow them to challenge not only the religious but the secular authorities of their day.

This is precisely what happened and, as we have seen. Franklin stresses that his family was already literate in the mid-16th century and, in Chapter 2, Franklin expresses pride that his great-grandfather possessed his own Bible and was able to read it in defiance of the Catholic Queen Mary (1516-1558). His family history is a testimony to this rebellious social and religious streak in early English society. It was a streak which flourished in the northern colonies. Strains of this tradition continue to this day, most notably in African American religious communities (cf. Chapter 1).

Wycliffe's translation of the Bible from the Latin vulgate was thus a fundamental step forward that offered a solid foundation for later Bible translations, the most authoritative of these being the King James 1611 Bible which remained in common use until the second half of the 20th century (cf. Chapter 1).

In this sense, when viewed from the perspective of the Great Chain of Being, the ecclesiastical standard reflects an attempt to establish a disparitary "idiom" corresponding to an elevated mesolect, which evolved within the "institutions" of the Catholic Church in England (Latin remaining the official acrolect). Later, the influence of Latin declined substantially with the establishment of the Anglican Church during the 16th century. That English gradually succeeded in supplanting Latin as the language of culture and scientific expression marks its definitive rise in status, particularly in association with the rapid expansion of the dissident Protestant movements during the 17th and 18th centuries and, of course, politically, with Britain's rise as a world power.

5. The Rise of Modified Secular Standard

In her book, *The Development of Standard English: 1300-1800*, Laura Wright (2001, 1-2) argues against the long-established view that "Standard English" grew out of the Central Midland dialect "as propagated by clerks in Chancery." She explains that this hypothesis was first developed by Samuels (1963) who

based his conclusions on the spelling of southern and Midland manuscripts and a “selective reading” of Ekwall (1956). Samuel’s ideas were further developed by Fisher (1977). The account that standard English was a product of Chancery English became the accepted account for decades. Wright makes the important distinction between “Standard English” and what she describes as a process of “standardization of English spelling” which obviously do not involve the same processes, the latter being necessarily a written interlanguage and not necessarily a faithful reflection of any particular natural spoken variety or register used by the writers.

While one should not doubt the important role of “Chancery English” as a language of administration, I would argue that it represented only one important set of idioms that served the interests of multiple institutions. These were often centred in London and the surrounding regions. But it must be emphasized that the standardization of English was a result of the interplay and convergence of multiple Middle English idioms which had developed within an equivalent number of functionally and socially diverse institutions. With the rise of an increasingly centralized royal government, a steady movement towards linguistic harmonization and standardization was under way. How else can we explain the melding of the northern, Midland and southern forms in the current English standard language: Northern (i.e. Scandinavian) *they* vs Southern *hey* (< OE *hīe*), Northern *aren* vs Southern *ben*, Northern *has* vs Southern *hath*, Northern *egges* vs Southern *eyren*, etc.

By the end of the 14th century, Chaucer, born in London around 1340 (d. 1400), and a survivor of the plague and the bloody wars against France, provides a good example of the increasingly prestigious English mesolect that was spoken by a wealthy and rapidly expanding middle class of London merchants. Fluent in French (he spent several years in France as a prisoner of war), English and Latin, his father was a vintner (wine merchant) and also a moneyer (minter of coins) in the Tower of London. As his name implies, several generations prior to this, his family had been shoe-makers.¹¹ Considered by many to be the “father of English poetry,” Chaucer happened to be the brother-in-law of John of Gaunt, the son of King Edward III, brother of Prince Edward (the Black Prince) and, finally, the father of the future King Henry IV.

Considering the close ties he entertained within the highest aristocratic circles of the court, there can be little doubt that Chaucer’s English reflects what was considered by his contemporaries to be an excellent *secular* linguistic model for high-born English-speaking men and women of the day. The Anglo-Norman

11 Chaucer derives his name from his family’s trade as shoe-makers, from French *chaussure* “shoe,” Old French, *chaussier* or *chaucier* “shoe-maker.”

elites, most of whom had already abandoned the French of their ancestors, had shifted towards this mesolectal variety of English simply because there was no prestigious aristocratic English “acrolect” to adopt. We have already seen that Hastings had marked its demise.

The consequence was that this newly anglicized Anglo-Norman nobility was conscious of having stepped down a notch in linguistic terms, particularly in relation to their Francien-speaking cousins in France. This sentiment of linguistic inferiority lingered on until the 16th century when the first English orthoepists took it upon themselves to prescribe a new, elevated model of English pronunciation and grammar that, in terms of elegance and precision, would rival the French spoken at the court of France.

6. Printing and the Codification of a Secular Standard

By William Caxton’s day (1422-1491), the social situation among the English peasantry had not changed significantly, except that the secular English mesolect was now the native language of all the descendants of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. Having said this, multilingualism was still common among the aristocracy and the wealthiest members of the English merchant class, as well as the clergy, still knew Latin and French. The difference was that, after 1400, French was generally learnt as a foreign language.

With the discovery and development of printing during the second half of the 15th century, however, in order facilitate typesetting and thus simplify the work of printers, it was imperative from a purely technical point of view to unify English orthography. William Caxton, like Franklin, was a printer and, in this well-known passage, he explains a number of practical points that have been already discussed above explain the dilemma he faced in choosing an appropriate variety or register of English on which to base his translation of *Eneydos* (i.e., the *Aeneid*), 1490:

I delybered and concluded to translate it in to englysshe And forthwyth toke a penne & ynke and wrote a leef or tweyne / whyche I ouersawe agayn to corecte it / And whã I sawe the fayr & straunge termes therin / I doubted that it sholde not please some gentylmen whiche late blamed me sayeng yt in my translacyons I had ouer curyous termes *whiche coude not be vnderstande of comyn people.* (my italics)

Since the “gentlemen” to whom he is referring suggested his translation would not be understood by the common people on account of the “over curious terms” he had used (proposed by clergymen perhaps), most probably of French or Latin origin, he experimented with another register, namely:

to vse olde and homely termes in my translacyons. and fayn wolde I satysfye euery man / and so to doo toke an olde boke and redde therin / and certaynly the englysshe was so *rude and brood*¹² that I coude not wele vnderstande it.

Here he is likely to be referring to an older text of unknown provenance which very likely contained what he perceived as older Middle English dialectal forms. In Caxton's mind, this English was more archaic and closer to the "rude and broad" basilectal varieties spoken by the populace. By its very nature, it was felt to be unsuitable to convey more elevated concepts and ideas. The linguistic distance between the various basilects was so considerable that no single one of these could have been adopted as a model. It is this he appears to be implying when he states that he cannot "satysfye euery man." We shall see that this was the problem with which the earliest colonists in British North America were to be confronted upon their arrival in North America as well when people from various regions of England now found themselves cohabiting in the same small settlements.

Caxton goes on to say that his "lorde abbot of Westmynster" showed him some texts written in what he describes as "Olde Englysshe" and which he claims was more like Dutch than English and he quickly shunted this option aside. It is at this point that he made his famous statement about the great variability of spoken English in his day, a mere century before the massive out-migration of poor British common people to North America.

And certaynly our langage now vsed varyeth ferre from that. whiche was vsed and spoken whan I was borne / For we englysshe men / ben borne vnder the domynacyon of the mone. whiche is neuer stedfaste / but euer wauerynge / wexynge one season / and waneth & dyscreaseth another season / And that *comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother*. (my italics)

To illustrate his point, he tells the well-known tale of a group of merchants, one of whom is named Sheffelde. They make landfall somewhere in the region of London along the Thames. They go to an inn and ask the hostess for "eggys" (a northern form which was eventually adopted into modern standard English). The woman responded that she "coude speke no frenshe." Another man who understood the term "translated" it for her saying that "he wolde haue 'eyren.'" I remain convinced that the "wyfe" in question was

12 Note the spelling of *brood* for "broad." Chaucer does the same in his *Canterbury Tales*. We shall see in Chapters 21 and 22 that this is an early example of ME /ɔ:/ that had already been raised to [o:] in the London area. This was a characteristic pronunciation of a subclass of modern-day *Goat* words in 17th-century New England (cf. "goat" spelt *goot*, "road" spelt *roode*, "load" spelt *lood*, etc. in the New England town records). This would suggest the source was in the Southeast of England.

simply teasing the man.¹³ Caxton, however, appears to interpret this story literally and writes:

Loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte. Egges or eyren? Certaynly it is harde to playse euery man bycause of dyuersite & chaūge of langage. For in these dayes euery man that is in ony reputacyon in his coūtre (country). wyll vtter his cōmynycacyon and maters in suche maners & termes / that fewe men shall vnderstonde theym

Interestingly, Caxton explains that, although the “clerkes” encouraged him to employ the formal Latinate terms commonly used in their ecclesiastical standard forms of language, characterized by the most elevated (“curious”) terms referred to above, he decided not to follow this route. He also rejected the highly variable and stigmatized dialects of “rude vplondyssh” men (i.e. Gloucester’s “lowe men”) whose language he describes as both “rude and brood.”

The solution he finally adopted was “a meane bytwene bothe” in which he “reduced & translated this sayd booke in to our englysshe *not ouer rude ne curyous but in suche termes as shall be vnderstanden by goddys grace accordynge to my cōpye.*”

To summarize, I interpret *not ouer rude* to mean “not too dialectal” and *ne curyous*, to be “not too close to the elaborate ecclesiastical English of the clergy,” but in *our englysshe*, that is, the language spoken by educated merchants from the English East Midlands and, more specifically, the idioms used in London-based companies to which he himself belonged, such as the Mercer’s Company or the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London of which he was the governor. Originally from Kent, the fact that Caxton had served as an apprentice to Robert Large, a wealthy textile mercer with connections on the continent but who was also Mayor of London and a member of Parliament, demonstrates that Caxton was counted among the higher echelons of his social class. Having lived in Bruges he was also fluent in French, which remained a prestigious and essential language for trading on the continent. He may also have known some Flemish. The form of English he selected for his prose was thus spoken by the higher middle classes in the London area. In Parts III and IV, we shall examine the influence London English had on Franklin’s RMS.

Once again, Caxton repeats that it is “harde to playse euery man” on account of diversity and change of language. We have seen that Franklin makes this same statement nearly three hundred years later and it is one of his primary

13 I can almost hear the snickering of those locals who overheard this episode. In my own research on dialect Breton, I have collected numerous stories of the same kind in which speakers teasingly (or sometimes mockingly) joke about the differences in the speech of outsiders from other parishes.

motivations for advocating his orthographic reform and creating a single proto-phonemic writing system (cf. his letters of July 20 and September 28, 1768; Part IV, Chapter 25).

Furthermore, Caxton's comments in this short passage appear to add supporting evidence for the sociolinguistic model I have outlined above for Late Middle English and Early Modern English.

Caxton's role in laying the orthographic foundations of Modern English was primordial and his basic system was fixed during this period. For practical purposes, it was reproduced by successive generations of printers. The result is that the Modern English orthographic system is essentially a linguistic fossil that, in many ways, better reflects the pronunciation of English during the late 15th century than contemporary English.

As we shall see, many others before Benjamin Franklin sought to modernize English spelling, beginning with the 16th-century orthoepists Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577), John Cheke (1514-1557), John Hart (d. 1574) and many others (cf. Chapter 13) who already considered Caxton's orthographic model to be outmoded in their day.

7. Towards a Secular "Norm" for the English State

By the 16th and 17th centuries, a period which saw England ascend to prominence as a world power, the English elites came to recognize the need to craft a disparitary idiom that would serve the needs not only of the royal court and state, but also of a rapidly increasing intellectual class of theologians, philosopher and scientists. Perhaps first and certainly foremost among these was Sir Thomas Smith, Queen Elizabeth I's foreign secretary and Ambassador to France. He was also the author of *De recta et emendata linguæ anglie scriptione* ("On Rectified and Amended Written English"), published in 1568. He is generally considered to be first orthoepist, along with his friend and associate, John Cheke (cf. Chapter 13). As alluded to in the previous section, their goal was to dignify the English language by simultaneously modernizing English orthography and defining a cultivated, elegant pronunciation for use in polite company.

Seen from this perspective, it is easier to understand the dramatic rise of England as one of Europe's foremost military and economic powers and the practical need to invent a new English "norm" or "acrolect" that would be considered appropriate for the English ruling classes. In large part, this explains the appearance of a class of scholars in the 16th century known as "orthoepists" whose function was directly tied to this need to fix the contours of a new "high" language or acrolect which, to repeat, would rival French as a language of

culture and philosophy while simultaneously setting the upper classes apart linguistically from the lower social orders.

Significantly for our story, Sir Thomas Smith is the only orthoepist who is mentioned by name in Franklin's *Reformed Method of Spelling* (Franklin, 1779, 467) and there can be little doubt that it was Smith's *De recta* that (directly or indirectly) that inspired him to launch his own spelling reform (cf. Chapter 13). As we shall see, dozens of other orthoepists followed Smith's lead and, in this regard, Franklin was merely one of many who attempted this task.

I am convinced that Franklin provided some of the names of the most influential orthoepists to Noah Webster when the latter visited him at his home in Philadelphia in 1786 to discuss the idea of an orthographic reform for the newly founded United States. They met while Webster was preparing his important *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789). The significance of this meeting will be examined Chapters 29 and 30.

8. Linguistic Diversity: Past and Present

8.1 A Middle English Example

Before we address the nature of the paritary and disparitary varieties that developed in America in the coming chapters, we must have a clearer idea of the basilectal varieties that were still spoken in England at the time of the 17th- and 18th-century colonial settlements. Any doubts regarding the existence of English *badumes*/basilects, similar to those of Breton discussed in the first part of this chapter, are quickly erased upon the examination of Angus MacIntosh's wonderful resource, *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval England* (MacIntosh, 1986; see also the French: Gilliéron & Edmont, 1902-1910, *Atlas linguistique de la France* and Orton and Deith's *Survey of English Dialects* (1962-1971) for spectacular examples of geolinguistic variety).

One word will serve as an illustration of this diversity, namely, the third person feminine subject pronoun *she* which, during the late medieval period had multiple forms such as *sche*, *scheo*, *scho*, *show*, *shoo*, *heo*, *hi*, *he*, *ho*, *hoo*, etc.¹⁴

14 LALME, List of forms for "she" according to country and location; http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme_frames.html

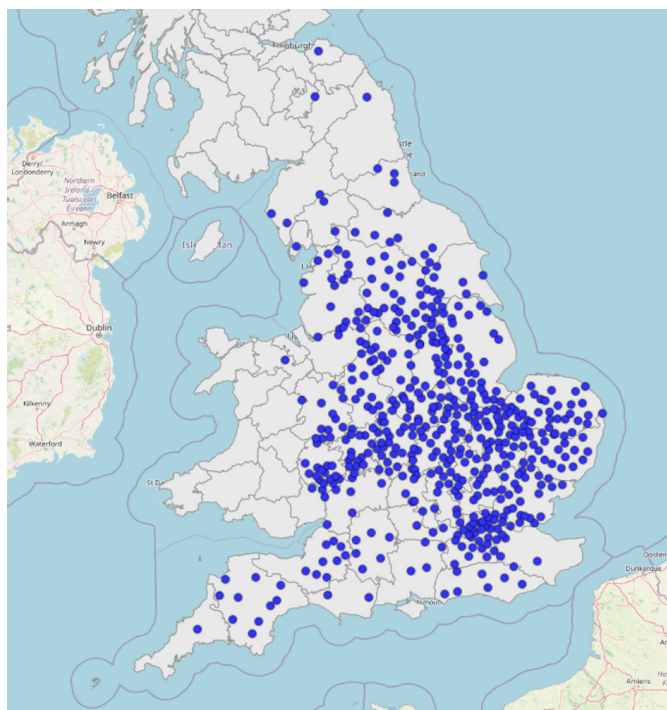


Fig. 10.1 LALME “she” forms of *sche*, *schee*, *scheo*, *sheo*, *show*, *sho* (Benskin et al., 2013), reproduced with permission.

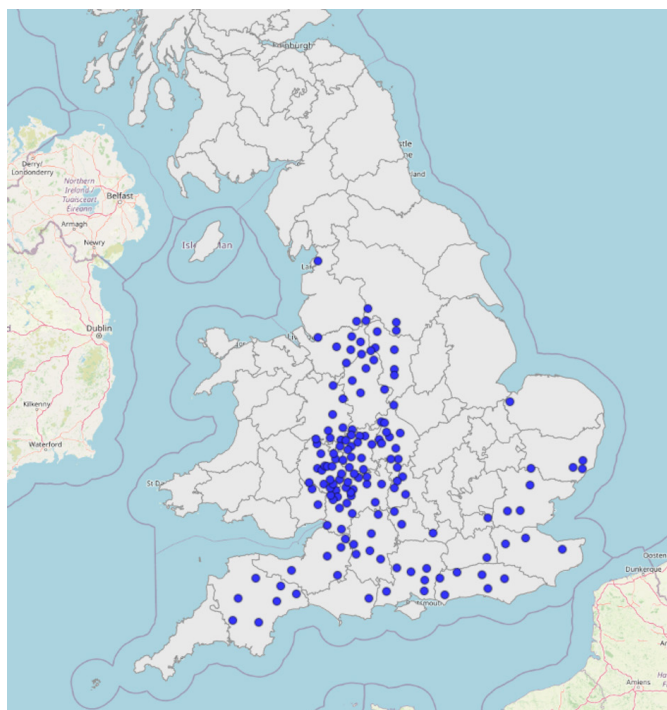


Fig. 10.2 LALME “she” forms in *heo*, *ho*, *hoo* (Benskin et al., 2013), reproduced with permission.

While the <sh-> series was the most dominant throughout much of England, hence our standard “she,” the least evolved forms originate from reflexes of Old English *hēo* “she,” which best survived in scattered areas of the West Midlands.

One should keep in mind that this is only the “tip of the iceberg” (Milroy, 1982b) in the sense that the LALME maps reflect only attested *written* forms! One can only imagine the degree of dialectal fragmentation that existed on the ground in terms of lexical and phonetic variety.

I interpret the shift from [h-] > [ʃ-] as having evolved along the following path: OE *hēo*, with <ē> representing a shortened, high-mid [e] or [i]: [hɛ:o] ~ [hio] > [ʃio] ~ [ʃeo] > [ʃe:]. In the London area, by the late 1500s, low-status speakers were saying [ʃi:] (cf. Chapter 17, Part III).¹⁵

8.2 Conservatism of the Modern English Basilects

In his article “The Dialects of England since 1776,” Ossi Ihalainen (1994, 205), a renowned specialist of English dialectology, and of Somerset English in particular, writes that the varieties of England remained stable between 1776 until the end of the 19th century and that, during that time, “no radical changes took place.” This period of linguistic stability at the basilectal level ended with the 1870 Education Act which resulted in the advent of obligatory universal education (however, 238 years after the Massachusetts Puritans!). As Ihalainen put it, this was a landmark event that signalled the “the end of an era.” He adds that “Generally speaking, dialects appear to have been far more conservative than ever believed possible by scholars.” The same occurred in France after the passing of the 1881 Jules Ferry Law, making education through the medium of French obligatory throughout France. From then on, the fate of the highly marked basilects was sealed.

I wholeheartedly support Ihalainen’s statement about the stability of non-standard English during this period and I would repeat, once again, that this linguistic conservatism results from the stratified caste-like system that blocked a significant proportion of the British people from acquiring literacy. As we have seen, France lagged far behind in this respect until 1881.

At another level, it is fair to say that for linguists, even today, the only valid representation of the English is the standard variety. As explained above, the non-standard dialects have always been assumed to be unworthy of study or consideration. Consider W. N. Francis’ statement (*Dialectology*, 1983), “The theoretical linguist is often rather disturbed by dialect variation, which may disrupt or complicate an overly abstract view of language structure” (cited in Chevillet, 1991, 23). Luckily, mentalities have changed over the last five or six

15 An interesting parallel of [h-] > [ʃ-] is seen in contemporary Breton dialects. In the area of south-central Cornouaille (Kerne), between Quimper and Concarneau, the general pronunciation for “today” is *hiou* [hiu] (literary *hiziv*). Just to the east of Concarneau, people say *chiou* [ʃiu].

decades. For this reason, I have attempted to integrate as much information regarding regional dialects in this book with a view to bring this much-neglected dimension into the discussion.

For reasons to be examined in Chapters 11 and 12, the conservatism of English basilects is far more striking in Great Britain than North America, where the diachronic continuity of language is less marked for reasons I shall explain shortly.

In my own interviews conducted with older Lancashire dialect speakers from Deane, Bolton, undertaken periodically between 1981 until 2015,¹⁶ I discovered that the older late ME form for “she,” which we see recorded in the West Midlands in Figure 10.2, was still pronounced *hoo* until the last few decades, and was pronounced [u: ~ ^hu:] with h-dropping, clearly a reflex of Old English *hēo*.

A man born in 1921 with family connections in Deane confirmed to me that, before World War II, only those who had had some schooling, or who were trying to be “posh,” used the word “she.” Most people in his day preferred “her” [ə ~ ɜ:] as the subject pronoun, just as in Somerset. (“Her” as a subj. pro. is not attested in the LALME, however.)

He went on to say that the use of *hoo* was mainly restricted to men, often those [ˈwæ:ɪkm dæ:nt ˈpɪt] “working down in the pit.” Women, he said, disliked the word because they thought it sounded disrespectful and preferred “her” [ə ~ ɜ:] or standard “she.” With time, men tended to avoid *hoo*, he explained, in order not to offend the women, and its use became less frequent and, eventually, disappeared altogether.

Whether one considers this account to be anecdotal or not is not necessarily the issue. The fact that an attentive dialect speaker could provide such a detailed explanation about one word is very revealing about their sensitivity to variation within their own communities. One hundred years before, however, there can be little doubt that *hoo* was part and parcel of the local dialect among both men and women in broad regions of the English West Midlands. This is clearly demonstrated in Edwin Waugh’s rich Lancashire dialect tales and poems (Waugh, 1874). Upton and Widdowson’s dialect map of the modern distribution of confirms this (Upton & Widdowson, 1996, 68). These basilectal varieties below are located in the same general areas as indicated in LALME.

If we accept Ihalainen’s assessment about English dialects remaining virtually unchanged from 1776 until the end of the 19th century, it would stand to sense that such forms were even more numerous and conservative and varied in 16th- and 17th-century Britain. For reasons explained at the beginning of this chapter, this extreme kind of dialectal variation was most notable at the parish level, with parishioners being able to identify the place of origin of people from

16 My informants were family members born between 1910 and 1921.

neighbouring parishes based on minor differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

Once again, it is clear the sociolinguistic conservatism observed here stemmed from the rigid class lines inherited from the medieval period. In western Brittany, identifying the precise place of origin of dialect speakers based on minor distinctions such as these was, until recently, a game among older speakers.

An interesting late 18th-century description of these markedly stigmatized regional English basilects is provided by the non-conformist Welsh minister Gruffydd Jones who, during the last quarter of the 18th century, dedicated his life to founding Bible schools, the objective being to teach the common people to read and write their native Welsh language rather than English. Jones was mortified by the fact that Welshmen who had emigrated during the 18th century to England had learnt regional English dialects rather than the standard language. This, he claimed, was a barrier to understanding sermons in standard English and pleaded that Welshmen should study the Welsh-language Bible for which there was already a wonderful translation (Bishop Morgan's 1588 translation).

And here... I cannot but wish it may be well observed, that it is the great unhappiness of such of our people as have gone from hence for employment into England, that they have exchanged their language¹⁷ for a jargon.¹⁸ *So corrupt is the English that they have learned, hardly intelligible but among themselves, and scarcely extends any farther than their marketing dialect, and common low conversation. How poorly qualified are these to benefit by an English sermon!?* (my italics). This is the pitiful case of many thousands now in London and Bristol...

This, and worse than this, is the case of those who live in or near our few English towns here, who cannot properly speaking be said to know any language at all¹⁹, when they have lost their Welsh; none to understand the Word of God in; insomuch that, if the Welsh tongue be taken from our common people, the sacrament of baptism had as good be taken away also, by which alone then they could be entitled to the name of Christians. (R. Tudur Jones, 1973, 68-69)

The reference here is to the English basilects/*badumes* described above. His reference to the market towns is significant in the sense that it subsumes the existence of interdialects (cf. above).

This is a rare contemporary testimony that reflects the nature of the basilect speech of lower-class English speakers in England, Wales and Scotland. As Caxton implies above, it also suggests that English sermons were delivered in higher register of the ecclesiastical standard which illiterate common people

17 Welsh.

18 Regional English dialects.

19 Here he is referring to a hybrid variety, strongly Welsh-influenced English, sometimes called Wenglish, which originally meant "English-influenced Welsh." Today it refers to Welsh-influenced English.

could not always understand.²⁰

Nevertheless, it is striking that the older rhetorical styles of 17th-century ecclesiastical standard remained in use until today, particularly in rural regions of America, as can be seen in this sermon by Elder Millard Pruitt, Baptist minister, Laurel Glenn, North Carolina (recorded September 1978) (*Children of the Heavenly King*, 1978, Library of Congress). The fact that this sermon was delivered spontaneously without the support of any written text is a testimony to the manner in which the ecclesiastical register was interiorized and restricted to a highly personal domain involving one's religious faith. It is now confined to purely liturgical functions (prayer, hymns, etc.) and utterly separate from the secular vernacular language. The pertinence of this dual mastery of the higher ecclesiastical register side-by-side with the regional vernacular also reveals the fundamental cultural and linguistic continuity in certain institutions since Franklin's day (in this case, the Laurel Glenn Baptist Church). This should be kept in mind in the discussions that follow in Chapters 11 and 12:

Let us all bow and try to pray to our kind and gracious and everlasting heavenly father once again to imbibe the goodness and mercy that thou hast extended unto a few of thy children of thy creation. And we've been blessed to meet here around this altar upon this, another beautiful Sabbath day. Good Lord, we're trying the best that we have ever learned how to come unto thee as little children this morning in humble prayer and supplication, trying to let our hearts and our voices unite in thy praises here in the earth ... We humbly thank thee, Lord that thou art still a-giving grace unto the humble in heart, Oh Lord, and will hear [...] their prayers when they cry unto thee, are asking of thee a blessing from heaven's world. Almighty God, Our Father; today, we humbly pray, Oh Lord, that thou would have mercy upon everyone everywhere, wherever that they may be that's trying to carry out thy way and show the children the way of the bleeding lamb of God whilst they still live in the world. Almighty God, Our Father..

8.3 Two Examples of Modern Basilectal Varieties in Context: Somerset and Lancashire

To provide readers less familiar with the nature of Modern English dialects with some concrete examples of non-standard idioms of English, I have randomly selected two passages of what I consider to be heirs of older basilects as they

20 I have collected numerous testimonies among Cornouaillais- and Tregor-Breton dialect speakers (i.e. close to 65%-70% of all first-language Breton speakers) who claim to have had great difficulty understanding Leonais-Breton speaking priests. The Leon dialect was the one on which the ecclesiastical standard was founded. I have heard a similar testimony recounted by a native of Guéméné-Penfao in Gallo-speaking Brittany who explained that, following death of their parish priest, the parishioners struggled to understand the standard French-speaking priest who replaced him.

were recorded by two writers at the end of the 19th century. As Ihalainen (1994) demonstrated, these stigmatized vernaculars had not changed significantly since the 18th century.

The first is taken from a romantic novel written in 1895 by Alicia A. Leith, entitled *A Plant of Lemon Verbena: A Somerset Idyll*. The author, a native of Somerset, chose to write her dialogues in local dialect as she heard and spoke it in her day. The passage below gives the reader a glimpse of the phonetic, grammatical and lexical variety found in the English dialects more generally. Note in particular the voicing of voiceless fricatives [f] > [v], [s] > [z] and [ʃ] > [ʒ] and other features, some of which can be observed in the passage by Robert of Gloucester in 1300 (cf. Chapter 1). We shall return to this topic in Chapters 11 and 12 when we examine the questions of Viereck (1985) and Wakelyn (1988), who wonder why this voicing, and other broad non-standard features, do not appear in American dialects (for more on southwestern English cf. Wakelyn 1972, 1974, 1986).

She never had no¹ other son but him, an' she'd a died² for that bwy³ her⁴ lov'd 'un⁵ zo⁶. 'Tis the thought o' that meakes⁷ me a bit zaft-har'ted⁸ auv'r⁹ Alfurd now his wife's gone. Him¹⁰ an' little Hannah has only me t'look to vor¹¹ hearth an' whoame¹². An' what I can do vor 'em I does¹³, an' like enuff¹⁴ her knows it, bless her! Even though her's¹⁵ doned¹⁶ wi¹⁷ the things of earth an' d¹⁸ rhest in the Lard's¹⁹ bosom... 'Twas Alfy as²⁰ rhode²¹ along o²² me in the light keart²³ down 'moor thik²⁴ marnen²⁵ of which I'm tellin 'ee²⁶. I can zee his wise young veace²⁷ turn'd oop²⁸ to sky, an' zee 'un shaken' his yellow curls that moth'r lov'd zo well. There baint²⁹ many curls left now on poor Alfurd's grey head! Mabbee the troubles tooked²⁹ the curl out, same as it's doned the gold... (pp. 41-42)	1. Multiple negation (common in all forms of non-standard English) 2. "She would have died" (common in American English) 3. boy [bu-i] (cf. Chapter 23, Diphthongs, ME /ui/, /oi/) 4. Her (subject pronoun for 'She', common in many dialects as far north as Lancashire) 5. 'un = survival of the Old English accusative 'hine' (vs dative = him), unstressed [ən] 6. so 7. makes 8. soft-hearted [za(:)ft ~ za(:)ftl] (cf. Chapter 21) 9. over 10. Him, subject pronoun = He (note also the use of 'us' as subject pronoun as in AAVE) 11. for 12. home (spelt "hwome" in 17th-century New England town registers) 13. does = do 14. enough 15. Her's = She has 16. done, finished
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21 This <rh> spelling is quite curious. I have not discussed it in the outline above because it is too complex to explain in one phrase (i.e. *rhest*, *rhode*). This spelling could represent several possibilities. Although normally alveolar, /r/ in Somerset and in Dorset could occasionally be realized as an apical [r] and this may be an attempt to represent this sound. Another possibility is that initial /r/, as in the examples here, were slightly devoiced giving the impression of an aspirated /r/. Unlike fully aspirated <rh> in Welsh, however, it is not phonemic (cf. Welsh /hr/ vs /r/). Thirdly, it might simply be an attempt by Leith to portray a strongly rhotic /r/ approximant.

I hadn't never zeen a man wi' lang hair avore³⁰ like a maid's! Leastways,³¹ not unless 'twere St Jan in mother's gurt³² Bible as laid to best parlour. Him³³ had hair like thik³⁴ stranger! An' as I minded³⁵ it, I think'd³⁶ 'twarn't³⁷ no wonder the Lard lov'd St Jan, if he did be³⁸ like him. (pp. 50-51)	17. wi' = with 18. d' = unstressed 'do' common in Gullah 19. Lard = Lord (not zaft, ztarm... as in Franklin's transcription [sta.um] of Addison's "Campaign," Chapter 8) 20. as = non-standard relative pronoun, "who," sometimes "whqt" when preceded by a male antecedent 21. along with 22. keart = cart pronounced [kja.ɪt] 23. thik < ME thulke / thilke "this" (cf. Robert of Gloucester 1300) 24. morning 25. ye = you 26. face 27. up 28. bain't = be not (common in Virginia) 29. took 30. before 31. At least, at any rate 32. great (due to metathesis gret > gert > gurt) 33. Him = he 34. thik = this 35. remembered 36. thought 37. 'twarn't = lit. "it weren't"/i.e. it wasn't 38. did be = periphrastic do (common throughout the Southwest of England but also in AAVE and Irish-English)
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The majority of settlers in Virginia, and a good number in Massachusetts (during the second wave of immigration), came from the Southwest of England (cf. Chapter 12), and often within a sixty-mile radius of Bristol (Bailyn, 1986b). They would have initially spoken dialects akin to this upon their arrival in North America. The linguistic traits observed in this text can be observed to this day in conservative varieties in the Virginia hinterland (cf. Le Corre, 2015). Nevertheless, many of these characteristics appear more broadly in other dialects of England, southern Ireland and the anglicized areas of South Wales (cf. David Parry 1977, 1979, 1999).

The second passage is taken from Edwin Waugh's *The Chimney Corner* (Waugh, 1874, 168-169). Waugh (1817-1890) was a native speaker of Lancashire dialect who felt so strongly about dignifying it as a literary language that he composed numerous volumes of dialect poetry and poignant short stories about rural and urban life of poor Lancashire folk. For his efforts he has been nicknamed Lancashire's Robert Burns. It is from this area that large numbers of Quakers left for Pennsylvania and Delaware.

“Well his mother wur¹ fleyed² on³ him gooin⁴ away fro’ whoam⁵, so hoo⁶ said, “Bide were⁷ thou art⁸, James, an’ be patient a bit...” An’ he’d tak⁹ th’¹⁰ first wark¹¹ he could leet [li:t] on¹², - as what it wur¹³, - till he could turn his-sel¹⁴ round¹⁵. So, at last, hoo consented; an’ off he set¹⁶.” “Th’ lad’s quite reet¹⁷,” said Betty. “I howd¹⁸ his wit¹⁹ good! There nought²⁰ war²¹ than slingin’ about at a loce end²²! If they’re yung an’ strung, an’ they’n²³ th’ use o’ their limbs, they should be agate²⁴ o’ some mak²⁵ o’ wark! I declare I’d elder²⁶ see ‘em²⁷ wortchin’²⁸ for th’ next to nought nor²⁹ see ‘em doin’ nought. It keeps ‘em out o’lumber³⁰, - an’ that’s summat³¹!” ... “And han³² yo³³ yerd³⁴ nought on³⁵ him yet?” “Yigh³⁶” ...(passes a letter to Sam) “Sam; thee³⁷ read it.” (to which he responds) “Gi’s howd³⁸.”	1. [wəɪ] was 2. troubled, worried about 3. about 4. [ˈgɪm] 5. [wʊm ~wɔm] “home” 6. [u:] “she” 7. [wəɪ] Stay where 8. [əərt] in spoken Lancs. 9. [tak] took 10. definite article [ə], normally before vowels; [t] + occlusives, nasals, liquids... 11. [wæɪk] 12. [li:t ɒn] “light on,” “find” 13. [wəɪ] was 14. himself 15. [æ:nd] 16. went 17. [ɹi:t] “right” 18. [əʊd]/[ɛɪd] “hold,” “consider” 19. mind, intelligence, judgement 20. [naʊt], [neyt] nought, nothing 21. “worse” 22. “slinging about at a loose end” idiom “remaining idle” 23. han = 3rd pl. Middle English: ha(ve) + n) 24. ready, prepared to go 25. [mak] “make,” “kind” 26. “rather” 27. probably from ME hem, not a reduced from of “them” 28. idiom, “struggling” 29. “than” 30. “trouble,” “mischief” 31. “something” 32. 2nd pl. = ha(ve) + n 33. you 34. “heard” 35. about 36. [jaɪ]; usually in response to a negative question as in French si, or German doch 37. [ðɪ] “Thee” for “thou” 38. Lit. “Give us hold,” “hand it to me”
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Although these two passages capture the general spirit of paritary Somerset and Lancashire *badumes*/basilects and were *written* by native dialect speakers, both are clearly *literary* works and, for this reason, they are somewhat *normalized* or levelled renditions of these two dialects. What is lacking in these passages, of course, is the prosodic colour, with the rising and falling intonation patterns, the rhythms and modulations of voice that would have accompanied such conversations. These have sadly been lost here.

Conclusion

Upon their arrival in America, it can be assumed that a large majority British settlers, whether Puritans in Massachusetts, Quakers in Delaware and Pennsylvania or Anglicans in Virginia, would have spoken similar basilects as their paritary, affective register. Many were bidialectal, particularly in Massachusetts where the level of literacy was significantly higher than in the colonies further south.

In Chapters 11 and 12, we seek to answer why, once 17th-century dialect speakers arrived in America, such basilectal varieties no longer could serve as the common mode of intercourse with neighbours, as they had back in their native parishes in England.²² We shall examine the process of koineization and the range of strategies employed by speakers of all social horizons to forge new common interdialects that were to develop into what is now called American English.

22 I want to remind the reader that I am not purposefully ignoring Welsh, Scots, Irish or other nationalities in this discussion. Simply, as we shall see in Chapter 12, the demographic nature of the 17th-century settlement of North America was overwhelmingly southern English.

11. The Genesis of American English: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Building on the foundations of the last chapter, the objective of Chapters 11 and 12 is to propose a broader theoretical framework to explain how secular English basilectal and mesolectal idioms and the ecclesiastical standard were consolidated, reworked and melded into multiple regional American koines (not just one). One of the most striking developments in this process is the way in which, by the early 18th century, multidialectal, basilect-speaking British settlers (mainly English during the 17th century), alongside a minority of multilingual European and African immigrants, had shed the most obtrusive features of their basilectal/paritary idioms and languages and adopted relatively homogeneous, levelled varieties of American English that, to 18th-century English ears at least, resembled the polite southern English mesolect.

This explains why the first section of this chapter begins with a case study involving descriptions and observations made by astonished English 18th-century visitors to America who commented on the “purity” and “unity” of English spoken throughout American colonies, both in the North and the South. In this context, similar accounts of Québécois French by French gentlemen, military officers and priests travelling in New France during the same time period will also be discussed. I shall argue that these observations are certainly not fortuitous and have common sociolinguistic explanations.

The second section broaches several sociolinguistic theories that, taken collectively, could explain how dialect levelling and the upwards drift towards the more prestigious mesolectal varieties of North American English and Québécois French took place. I view the following theories under consideration in this chapter to be separate elements of an interconnected process:

- Salikoko Mufwene’s “founder generation principle” and the concept of the “feature pool” in colonial contexts.
- Related to this is the topic of “new dialect formation,” which will

introduce my concepts of the “sharedness principle” in contact situations as well as the notion of a “phonetic range” within the koineization process (a full discussion will be devoted to this topic in Chapter 12).

- Howard Giles’ Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), regarding the strategies implemented by individuals to adapt or assimilate their speech (or not!) to the variety(ies) of their interlocutors (i.e. conversion and diversion).
- My interpretation of Derek Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram Theory and the role of children and adolescents in providing linguistic unity in multidialectal colonial settings.

The theoretical foundations on which this study rests are intended to provide a means of tracing the development of early American English during the 17th and early 18th centuries. In so doing, the goal is to identify the phonemic inventory of Benjamin Franklin’s native Boston accent with some degree of precision. In Chapter 15, we shall see how his rhymes and evidence from multiple contemporary sources will combine to reinforce the observations made herein.

1. Language Development in Colonial North America

1.1 British Testimonies Regarding the Uniformity of 18th-Century American English

In an article entitled “British Recognition of American Speech in the Eighteenth Century,” Allen Walker Read (1933) offers tantalizing evidence that regional koines had already developed in colonial America by the middle of the 1700s. This is confirmed by Franklin’s remarks made in 1739 letter regarding what he considered as being “typical” regional pronunciations and grammatical characteristics in the various colonies (cf. Chapter 14). Webster’s *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789) offers scores of examples showing well-anchored regionalisms (from North to South) in colonial American English. All of the examples given are of English origin.

In in this article, Read notes the amazement of 18th-century British visitors to America regarding what they described as an “absence of dialect.” Read explains this linguistic harmony as follows: it is “now accepted as normal to any colonial speech. In the jostling of speech characteristics imported from many regions, the peculiarities are very soon worn away and a state approaching homogeneity ensues” (Read, 1933, 325, cited by Montgomery 1996, 216). The question, however, is why the homogeneity converges with the mesolect or standard?

Read’s evidence is based on numerous testimonies. For instance, Hugh Jones,

who lived in Virginia from 1716 to 1721, one hundred years after its initial settlement, gives what is perhaps the earliest British evaluation of American English writing, in his *An Accidence of the English Tongue* (London, 1724): “the Planters, and even the Native Negroes generally talk good English without Idiom or Tone, and can discourse handsomely upon most common Subjects....” (Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 20). In this context, I take “tone” to mean “accent” and “idiom” to signify non-standard grammar and dialect words. In other words, their accent must have sounded familiar to his own. This last point is interesting for scholars of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) since it suggests that, at least during the 18th century, many African Americans were also seen to speak a more standard variety of English, and not creole. This can be explained in part by the fact that, during this early period of settlement, the majority of Africans lived on small holdings and in close proximity to the British indentured servants who worked alongside them. This close social proximity between black and white people continued until the American Civil War as can be seen in the US Census of 1860 which plainly indicates that only a minority of Africans lived on large plantations of the kind shown in Hollywood films (i.e. with 500 to 1,000 slaves). Indeed, Franklin himself owned two slaves and one can wonder what kind of English they spoke. Furthermore, having once been an indentured servant to his brother, one can wonder how clear the lines between servanthood and “slavery” were in his mind given that he referred to them, and other Africans living in bondage, as “servants.” Laws were even passed during the early decades of the slavery period (1680s) to punish the numerous indentured servants and “slaves” who made their escape together! It is worth noting that “slavery” as an institution was not officially instituted in Virginia until 1661 (Rose, 1999, 16).

Another visitor, Lord Adam Gordon, a Scottish military officer from Aberdeenshire, gives special praise to Philadelphians during a visit there in 1764-1765.

the propriety of Language here surprized me much, the English tongue being spoken by all ranks, in a degree of purity and perfection, surpassing any, but the polite part of London... (my italics) Boston, moreover, is more like an English Old Town than any in America, - the Language and manner of the people, very much resemble the old Country, and all the Neighbouring lands and Villages, carry with them the same Idea. (Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 20-21)

This last assessment is significant in that, as a standard-English-speaking Scottish gentleman and officer, their English sounded to him like that of the educated standard English spoken in London. I’m assuming, perhaps incorrectly, that he spoke a form of modified Scottish English of the kind described by Beal (1999, 64). Note his remark “surpassing any, but the polite part of London...” The implication is that they spoke a levelled variety, free of “broad” dialecticisms

that resembled the southern English “mesolect,” but which was not quite as sophisticated as that spoken by the most refined London speakers.

Gordon’s remarks about the English of Boston is particularly revealing in that this probably explains why Franklin never encountered the hostility experienced by orthoepists such as Sheridan (an Irishman), Buchanan (a Scot) or Spence (a northern Englishman) (cf. Chapter 14). In other words, upon arriving in London his accent did not strike anyone as being particularly “un-English,” even if it was not quite up-to-par from the point of view of the elites. This seems to be borne out by the phonological evidence provided for New England in Part III.

William Eddis, writing a letter dated June 8, 1770, makes the following observations:

In England, almost every county is distinguished by a peculiar dialect; even different habits, and different modes of thinking, evidently discriminate inhabitants, whose local situation is not far remote: but in Maryland and throughout the adjacent provinces, it is worthy of observation, that a striking similarity of speech universally prevails; and it is strictly true, that the pronunciation of the generality of the people has an accuracy and elegance, that cannot fail of gratifying the most judicious ear. (Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 21)

Eddis observes that, considering that the settlers came from every part of Great Britain, Ireland and Europe more generally (a great exaggeration at this time, as we shall see), he would have imagined that the English language would be “greatly corrupted by such a strange intermixture of curious nations.” He goes on to say the following:

The reverse is, however, true. The language of the immediate descendants of such a promiscuous ancestry is perfectly uniform, and unadulterated; *nor has it borrowed any provincial, or national accent, from its British or foreign parentage.* (my italics)

For my part, I confess myself totally at a loss to account for the apparent difference, between the colonists and persons under equal circumstance of education and fortune, resident in the mother country. *This uniformity of language prevails not only on the coast, where Europeans form a considerable mass of the people, but likewise in the interior parts, where population has made but slow advances; and where opportunities seldom occur to derive any great advantages from an intercourse with intelligent strangers.* (Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 21; my italics)

Here the remark that the American colonists had not borrowed any provincial, or national accent, suggests to me that he considered it to be “neutral,” an unhappy term in my opinion, which is often used when it is associated with the standard. It is the same today in French. When someone says “*Il n’a pas d’accent*,” this can only mean that he speaks standard (Parisian) French.

Read quotes another account by a Derbyshire man named Nicholas Cresswell

who enters the following in his diary (July 19, 1777):

Though the inhabitants of this Country are composed of different Nations and different languages, yet it is very remarkable that they in general speak better English than the English do. No County or Colonial dialect is to be distinguished here, except it be the New Englanders, who have a *sort of whining cadence* (my italics) that I cannot describe. (Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 21)

The nasal “whining” is still a characteristic of conservative Massachusetts speech today, and would appear to be an inheritance from the Puritan strongholds of East Anglia. In order to illustrate this, Krapp (1925, 23) cites Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* (1663, Part I, Canto III, ll. 1149-1160) to describe the “twang of the nose” of Puritan preachers:

Synods are whelps o’ th’ Inquisition,
A mongrel breed of like pernicion,...
Whose business is, by cunning sleight
To cast a figure for men’s light;
To find in lines of beard and face
The physiognomy of Grace,
And by the sound and *twang of nose* (my italics)
If all be sound within disclose;
Free from a crack or flaw of sinning
As men try pipkins by the ringing.

Both Webster and Franklin firmly condemn not only the drawling New England accent but also the “whining cant,” as Webster put it, and the nasal quality of the accent of the “country people”:

Such are the causes of the local peculiarities in pronunciation, which prevail among the country people in New England, and which, to foreigners, are the objects of ridicule. The great error in their manner of speaking proceeds immediately from not opening the mouth sufficiently. Hence words are *drawled out* in a careless lazy manner, or *the sound finds a passage thro the nose*. Nothing can be so disagreeable as that *drawling, whining cant* that distinguishes *a certain class of people* (my italics); and too much pains cannot be taken to reform the practice. (Webster, 1789, 108)

Read provides yet another example of a certain Jonathan Boucher who lived in Maryland, or perhaps Virginia, from 1759-1775. He too expresses his amazement at the harmony of the regional speech. In a letter dated December 23, 1777 he writes: “It is still more extraordinary that in North America, there prevails not only, I believe, *the purest Pronunciation of the English Tongue that is anywhere to be met with, but a perfect Uniformity.*” He goes on to state that the colonies were peopled by “settlers from England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Holland, and Sweden, who also all differed in dialect, and many in language, from the present inhabitants of that continent...” (Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 21-22).

It is important to point out that, although these non-English Europeans were

numerous in certain colonies, particularly in Pennsylvania (cf. section 4 below), we shall see that the first 1790 US census shows that they did not exceed 10% of the total European population. The English were still very much in the majority throughout the colonies at this time, particularly in New England, where this same census indicates that around 95% of the population claimed English origins.

Ellis' remark that the Americans do not speak with any marked county dialect and Boucher's comment about them having the "purest Pronunciation of the English Tongue" and its "perfect Uniformity" might bring a smile to the lips of modern Englishmen but these commentaries are revealing in the sense that, to the ear of an educated Englishman of that time, American speech must have resembled that of the more educated classes of speakers in the home counties around London. We shall be examining the reasons for this state of affairs in the following sections, including the crucial role of intermarriages of dialect speakers from different regions of England in smoothing away marked phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical differences, often in the direction of the ecclesiastical and secular standards.

Having said that, these observations must be viewed with caution and the remarks regarding the "uniformity" and "purity" of American English can only be understood when compared to sociolinguistic situation back in Britain, where the broad, stigmatized basilects of the British rural dwellers and urban working classes dominated the linguistic landscape of England, the Scotland lowlands as well as English-speaking Wales and Ireland until the first half of the 20th century. Even today, Trudgill (1974, 3) claims that only 3% of the English population speaks with an RP accent.

Read himself came to this conclusion long ago, writing, "Accustomed as he was to the diversity of dialect in his own island, the Englishman found the purity and uniformity of English in America" (Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 22).

In a remarkably perceptive contemporary explanation, the London editor of Ramsay's *History of the American Revolution* (1789) writes:

It is a curious fact that there is perhaps no one portion of the British Empire in which two or three millions of persons are to be found, who speak their tongue with greater purity, or a truer pronunciation, than the white inhabitants of the United States. This was attributed, to a penetrating observer, to the British subjects assembled in America from various quarters, who, in consequence of their intercourse and intermarriages, soon dropped the peculiarities of their provincial idioms, retaining only what was common and fundamental to them all, a process which the frequency or rather the universality of school learning in North America, must naturally have assisted. (cited in Read, 1933, in Dillard, 1980, 22)

This observation is corroborated to a large degree by modern sociolinguistic research and can be explained by what I have called the "sharedness principle,"

that is, the idea that the “feature pool” of a given colony consists of a mass of features that are shared by most speakers, or at least that are familiar to them. In the context of purely oral, paritary idioms, those non-standard features that are shared by the majority of speakers stand the best chance of surviving, regardless of the native dialects of the speakers, hence the persistence of multiple negation, a-prefixing, etc. in non-standard American English, and in the context of this study, commonly shared phonological characteristics.

1.2 Parallels between Colonial French and English in North America¹

The American situation outlined above conforms remarkably well with the situation in Québec around the same period and I am not aware of any studies which have compared the two cases from a sociolinguistic perspective.

French Canada was explored and claimed for France by the Breton navigator, Jacques Cartier in 1534. However, serious, organized settlement did not begin until the early 1630s and was largely limited to the region around present-day Montreal and Québec. Nor was the settlement as prolific as the British colonization further south. By 1680, there were only 11,000 first generation French settlers in Québec, in contrast to 150,000 British colonists further south.

Nevertheless, the nature of the French language, as it developed in Québec, presents some striking similarities with the linguistic situation in British America that may provide clues regarding the manner in which koines developed in both regions.

Jean-Denis Gendron’s illuminating account of the origins of the Québécois French “accent” provides interesting (socio)linguistic data that support a number of the hypotheses outlined further below in this chapter (Gendron, 2007, see also Gendron, 1966).

Like Read’s account of English visitors to British America, Gendron quotes 17th- and 18th-century French visitors to Québec who were astounded not only by the uniform nature of the speech of the French Canadians, regardless of social class distinctions, but also what they judged to be its excellent quality. Here are some examples, all cited in Gendron (2007, 47-51):

1651: Simon Denys, newly settled in Canada writes “La langue française y est parlée avec élégance.” (The French language is spoken with elegance.) (Ibid., 47)

1670, 1675: father Chrestien Le Clercq, quoting Father Allart states “il (Father Germain Allart) nous assuroit que nous y trouverions même *un langage plus poli, une énonciation nette et pure, une prononciation sans accent.*” (He assured us that we would even encounter a form of speech that is more polite, articulated in a

1 All French quotations have been translated by the author.

clear and pure manner, a pronunciation which is without accent.) (Ibid., 47-48)

He adds that after he arrived in Canada, “mais il est vrai que lorsque je fus sur les lieux, je connus qu’on ne m’avoit rien flaté.” (I learnt later when I was on location that they had not exaggerated.)

1702: Bacqueville de la Potherie “On parle ici parfaitement bien, *sans mauvais accent*. Quoi qu’il y ait un mélange de Presque toutes les Provinces de France, *on ne sauroit distinguer le parler d’aucune dans les Canadiennes*.” (French is spoken perfectly well, without a bad accent. Even though there is a mix of people from nearly all the provinces of France, one could not distinguish the speech of any of these in the variety spoken by the Canadians.) (Ibid., 48)

1705-1708, 1720: Father de Charlevoix “*nulle part ailleurs on ne parle plus purement notre Langue. On ne remarque même ici aucun Accent*.” (Nowhere else is our language spoken more purely. One cannot even notice an accent.) (Ibid., 48)

1736: Father Joseph Thoulier d’Olivet “On peut envoyer un opéra en Canada, et *il sera chanté à Québec, note pour note, sur le même ton qu’à Paris* : mais on ne sauroit envoyer une phrase de conversation à Montpellier ou à Bordeaux, et faire qu’elle y soit prononcée, syllabe pour syllabe, comme à la cour. Aussi est-ce une ancienne maxime, que, *pour bien parler françois, il ne faut point avoir d’accent*.” (One can send an opera to Canada and *it will be sung in Québec, note for note, in the same way as in Paris*: but one could not send a phrase of conversation to Montpellier or to Bordeaux, and have it pronounced, syllable by syllable, in the same manner as at the [royal] court. As the old maxim goes, “*to speak good French, one cannot have an accent*.”) (Ibid., 49)

1749: Pehr Kalm (a Swede) in his private journal, “Tous, ici, tiennent pour assurer que les gens du commun parlent ordinairement au Canada *un français plus pur qu’en n’importe quelle Province de France et qu’ils peuvent même, à coup sûr, rivaliser avec Paris. Ce sont les Français nés à Paris, eux-mêmes, qui ont été obligés de le reconnaître*.” (Everyone here take it for a fact that *the common people in Canada normally speak a form of French that is purer than in any province of France and that it can even, without doubt, rival with Paris. It is the Frenchmen themselves who were born in Paris who were obliged to admit this*.) (Ibid., 49)

1752: Louis Franquet, in his journal recording his second trip to Montréal writes “Les femmes y sont de figures plus jolies que belles... *parlant un français épuré, n’ont pas le moindre accent*...” (The women are prettier than they are beautiful... *and speak a [form of] French that has been purged of impurities and they do not have the slightest accent*.) (Ibid., 49)

1755: Jean-Baptiste d’Aleyrac, a French army officer who fought at Fort William Henry, Ticonderoga, Plains of Abraham and St. Foy (cf. Chapter 7), wrote that “*Il n’y a pas de patois de ce pays. Tous les Canadiens parlent un français pareil au nôtre*.” (There are no patois (basilects) in this country. All the Canadians *speak a form of French which is the same as ours*.) (Ibid., 50)

1756: Marquis de Montcalm, commander of French forces during the French and Indian Wars states “J’ai observé que les paysans canadiens *parlent très bien le français*.” (I observed that the Canadian peasants (farmers) *speak French very well.*) (Ibid., 50)

1757: Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, de Montcalm’s aide de camp writes “Ils parlent avec aisance, ils ne savent pas écrire, *leur accent est aussi bon qu’à Paris*, leur diction est remplie de phrases vicieuses empruntées de la langue des sauvages ou des termes de marine, appliqués dans le style ordinaire.” (They [i.e. the Québécois] speak with ease, they do not know how to write, *their accent is as good as in Paris*, their diction is filled with uncouth expressions borrowed from the savages (i.e. Amerindians) or nautical terms which they use in their everyday speech.)

1761: Thomas Jefferys, in his book entitled the Natural and Civil History of the French Dominions in north and South America claims the Québécois “*speak the French in the greatest purity, and without the least false accent.*” (Ibid., 50-51)

To summarize, the focus of these observations, in order of importance, is on:

- The Québécois’ lack of a regional “accent:” this can only be interpreted as meaning that, for these observers, the Québécois accent resembled the most prestigious French pronunciation of their time. This interpretation is reinforced by d’Aleyrac’s comment that it is “the same as ours.” In other words, it was close to what was called “le bel usage,” i.e., the paritary variety commonly used among the aristocracy at the court of France.
- The association of Québécois French with the most prestigious form of spoken French explains the remarks regarding its purity, clarity and elegance.
- Finally, its uniformity *regardless of social class* is what most surprised those belonging to the higher social ranks. In this respect, we see an identical parallel with the remarks by British travellers regarding the unity of the American vernacular.

The impressions of these French priests, nobles and high-ranking officers serving in the French army can be explained by the fact that most of them were born and raised north of the river Loire and the prestigious varieties they spoke were descended from the *langue d’oil* of northern France (as opposed to the *langue d’oc* spoken in the South of France (*Occitanie*)) and, more specifically, the prestigious variety of the kingdom associated with the royal court of France known as *francien*. From the Middle Ages onwards, this was the dialect that was cultivated by the elites in and around Paris and it is this variety that ultimately became the basis for the French literary language, albeit with considerable changes following the French Revolution of 1789. We shall return to this

discussion of French Québec below.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 The Founder Generation Principle

The point here is that the observations made by travellers to both New France and colonial America regarding the “uniformity” and “purity” of the speech in both regions is doubtless the result of the convergence of the basilectal varieties of the settlers of both colonies towards the respective mesolects of both nations.

The question we shall now attempt to answer is the following:

- What explains the convergence towards the English and French mesolectal standards that took place in colonial British America during the 17th and 18th centuries?
- What are the theoretical models that might explain these parallel processes?

I shall now outline the theoretical approaches of Salikoko Mufwene, Derek Bickerton and Howard Giles. Considered in conjunction with Le Dû and Le Berre’s model discussed in the last chapter, I propose that their ideas, when taken collectively, provide a plausible answer to these questions and a foundation on which to build. One of the pitfalls I seek to avoid is the assumption that any given feature (phonetic, morphological or lexical elements) results from a single historical antecedent which can be considered to be a historical “ancestor.” Rather, I prefer to interpret historical phonology in terms of “phonetic ranges” operating within competing “feature pools.”

The advantage of adopting the concept of the “phonetic range,” over that of the “phoneme,” is that the latter is too restrictive when discussing multiple varieties of any language. In other words, a phonemic analysis can only apply to a specific speech community sharing a similar historical and cultural background. Put another way, it can only represent the phonological system of a given idiom operating in a given institution. The phonetic range, on the other hand, applies to multiple varieties and groups together the most common variant pronunciations of a given vowel or consonant for any specific key word among Wells’ lexical sets.

The first theoretical concept to be discussed here concerns Mufwene’s “founder generation principle,” the idea that it is the first generation(s) of settlers in a given colony that contributes most strongly to the linguistic foundation (and, I would also add, the sociocultural foundation) to which all later settlers are encouraged, and sometimes obliged, to conform (Mufwene, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2015). In Mufwene’s case, his concentration has been on unfree

workforces of multilingual African labourers.

Nevertheless, with regard to the American colonial situation, Mufwene was preceded by Zelinsky (1992, 13-14, quoted in Sollicec, 2021, 64) who formulated a similar concept under the title of “Doctrine of First Effective Settlement” and which he applied to the United States.

Whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance to the later social and cultural geography of the area, *no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been...* (my italics) in terms of lasting impact, the activities of a few hundred, or even a few score, initial colonizers can mean much more for the cultural geography of a place than the contributions of tens of thousands of new immigrants generations later.

As we have seen, this has been the claim for Québec and New England. Although Mufwene’s interests deal mainly with the genesis of African-influenced creoles, many of the principles he outlines are applicable to other colonial situations, the major difference being that creoles are grammatical idioms that evolve out of pidgins. The latter, in turn, first arise when speakers of multiple languages or dialects, with no common interlanguage, find themselves thrust together, often under great duress, in which they have no choice but to work and invent a lexically-based system of communication to survive.

The colonial situations in North America described here, however, involve contacts between speakers of multiple *dialects* of 17th- and 18th-century French and English. Simply put, the common point shared by creoles and colonial English and French is language mixing with a dominant lexifier, on one hand (cf. Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram Theory below), and dialect mixing, on the other, with a dominant mesolectal lexifier shaping and often excluding the most socially stigmatized varieties (more on this below).

In his landmark studies on the development of creoles in colonial situations, Mufwene very rightly highlights what has already been stated previously, namely, the importance of understanding the basilectal nature of the 17th- and 18th-century contact vernaculars.

Along with Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985) and Chaudenson (1992; see also Mufwene 1983), I criticize a shortcoming common in most studies, viz., *the comparison of creoles’ structural features with those of the standard varieties of their lexifiers rather than of their nonstandard varieties. The illusion that the Europeans with whom the non-Europeans interacted on the plantations spoke the standard varieties of their lexifiers is not consistent with sociohistorical information available at the beginning of the colonies* (my italics). Some 17th-century letters addressed to, for instance, the West Indian Company, the Virginia Company, the [Dutch] West India Company, or their other European counterparts reveal that their authors were typically low-ranking employees who had been sent on difficult ground-

breaking missions in the colonies. They are consistent with studies of Ship English, such as Bailey & Ross (1988:196-197), which argues that ‘most of the sailors were illiterate, including many of the captains and masters’. *According to this literature, the varieties spoken aboard the ships must have been more nonstandard than the ship logs indicate, especially as the written medium may have skewed the samples in the direction of the standard variety.* (my italics) (Mufwene, 2015, 89)

I wholeheartedly agree with Mufwene’s remark about the number of studies that assume the contact varieties spoken by Europeans being “standard.” This surprisingly naïve vision highlights the need for a bottom-up dialectal approach to such matters. Furthermore, his observations tie in well with Le Dù and Le Berre’s concept of “institution” and “idiom” discussed in the previous chapter. In this specific case, the “idiom” he refers to was used by illiterate, basilect-speaking English seamen, in the context of a larger maritime “institution” of the British merchant fleet. The 16th- and 17th-century English varieties with which the West Africans would have first come into contact were largely from (south) eastern and southwestern England, the major ports being Bristol and London at that time. Note also that the French observers mention on several occasions that the French Canadians commonly used vocabulary normally used in nautical contexts in their daily language.²

Similarly, the non-standard southern English basilects spoken by English seamen were instrumental in the creation of the West African creoles of the 16th and 17th centuries. This could very well explain numerous similarities between of the tense-aspectual system of the West African and Caribbean creoles and varieties of modern AAVE that were constructed around the habitual functions of periphrastic *Do* and invariant *Be* in southwestern England, and often incorrectly assumed to be of Hiberno-English origin (cf. German, 1996, 2006; Ihalainen 1991).

Another important point is that the phonology of the lowest-status speakers should be assumed to have remained “broad” even after grammatical and lexical convergence was underway. Here again, however, the most educated speakers served as local linguistic models and the majority of these must have been sensitive to the fashions of the English mesolects spoken and written by preachers, university-educated men but also lawyers, military officers and administrators. The question of how the settlers adopted their speech can be explained by Giles’ Communication Accommodation Theory discussed below. In such cases, individuals were constantly juggling with the registers with which

2 This information was provided by the *Musée de l’émigration française au Canada*, Tourouvre, Le Perche, Lower Normandy (2021). Jean Le Dù, informed me that while undertaking his *Atlas linguistique des petites Antilles* with Guylaine Brun-Trigaud, he noted numerous French nautical terms used by the *Antillais* that were common to his native Brittany (German, personal communication 2011). One can assume that the causes for this are similar to those described by Mufwene above.

they were most familiar and adapting them to facilitate communication with their neighbours (cf. Le Berre and Le Dû's definition of "register" in Chapter 10). Summarizing ideas expressed in his book, the *Ecology of Language Evolution* (2001), Mufwene provides a model for this kind of interaction:

A lot of changes happen simply through the efforts of speakers to accommodate each other. Many others occur through speaker-based innovations that spread within speech communities, and the spread itself occurs through the mutual accommodations of speakers. Assuming that languages are species, the real contacts that matter even in the case of the development of creoles are those occurring among the idiolects of individuals who interact with each other.

One must really understand the dynamics of population behavior to understand how changes occur in a language or dialect as a communal phenomenon *extrapolated from the coexistence of idiolects* (my italics). For me, creoles are among the latest instantiations of language speciation under the specific ecological conditions of the European colonization of the rest of the world.

These speciations are indeed reminiscent of the diversification of Vulgar Latin into Romance languages, *of the evolution of English under different contact conditions*, (my italics) and of the speciation of Indo-European and Bantu languages (among a host of all conceivable language families and subfamilies). *All these conditions involve some form of colonization and I invoke variation in colonization style to account for variation in kinds of population contacts, which produced different kinds of language restructuring* (my italics). Aside from traditional cases of structural change and of the emergence of new varieties, I take "language evolution" to also subsume cases of language endangerment and loss, as explained in my book *The Ecology of Language Evolution*. (Mufwene, 2001, n.p.; see especially Chapters 6 and 7)

Another factor that must be taken into account is that dialect levelling had already occurred to some degree prior to the colonization period (cf. Chapter 10) which led to partially simplified contact varieties in Britain which had served as *linguae francae* in various peasant communities in England. Market towns can also be seen to have been centres for this kind of vernacular exchange where linguistic compromise (cf. Giles' "convergence" below) led to a degree of levelling at the basilectal level that may help explain the morphological simplification one observes in many English dialects, for instance, invariable *Be* in the south of England, invariant *is* in Yorkshire, and invariant *(h)ain't* (involving "have" and "be") with all persons. The fact that our concern is primarily on phonology renders the question even more complex in terms of variational possibilities. The models that were in competition were as follows:

- a. The highly local but also high flexible and adaptable regional interdialectal basilects (purely oral with no written tradition) spoken by the illiterate peasantry in their commercial dealings in the market towns, etc.
- b. The ecclesiastical standards which were committed to writing for

religious purposes (sermons, rituals, hymns, etc.) and, during the earliest stages, were very likely inspired by these interdialectal commercial basilects to create the foundation for a metalanguage to be used for practical exchanges between the priesthood and their congregations.

- c. The secular standard which was, to some degree, a fusion of the two prior categories and which, in the London area, eventually developed over time into the “norm” for all of Britain (cf. Chapter 10).

In this last category, it is only natural that the ecclesiastical model should have served as a basis for the rising secular standard, given that the clerks who kept the records in, say, the Chancery, were generally all trained in religious establishments.

Let us now return for a moment to this idea of the founder generations of New England and New France and explore the data more closely.

2.1.1 A “Norman” Founder Generation for Québec?

The native language or “idiom” of the French colonists that first settled Canada was most likely the one spoken in their home parishes, that is their local *patois* (basilects or *badumes*). A significant percentage of the first generation of these French settlers were from Normandy and Lower Normandy, reinforced by a large component from settlers from north of the Loire river. The very first of these arrived in Québec between 1634-1635 and originated from Mortagne-au-Perche and the surrounding villages in the region of the Perche, only 137 km (85 miles) from Paris. Based on the French census of 1663, Robert Larin (2000, 145, cited in Gendron, 2007, 62), presented the following breakdown of settlers in Québec. For sociolinguistic purposes, I have divided them into two population groups. The first to be considered here are those from north of the River Loire and the second from south of the Loire, and more particularly, from the region surrounding La Rochelle, a major French port from which many of the immigrants departed for Canada.

By far the largest component of any single regional population was that of the Normans, which Larin puts at 22.6% with a further 11.4% coming from the Perche in Lower Normandy for a total of 34%. The large Norman contribution can be explained by the fact that most of these left from the port of Le Havre in Normandy. Only 7.2% came from the Ile de France and here one must recall that this includes those from rural areas outside of the city. Surprisingly, only 1.8% of these settlers were from Picardy, just to the north of Normandy and only 2.2% from the sea-faring region of Brittany. Overall, however, a large majority of the settlers came from north of the Loire, that is, 58.4% out of a total of 89.3%. Here I

am assuming that there is either an error in the census or that the missing 10.7% may represent mixed French-Native American marriages which the census-takers may not have been accounted for (purposely or not) and of which there were certainly many, particularly among the *coureurs des bois* and *trappeurs*.

It is important to add that the contribution from the Occitan-speaking regions was minimal. Related to this point, these Aunis, Poitou and Saintonge dialects of French are significantly different from the Occitan language varieties spoken south of the Garonne. It is the varieties of (partially?) standardized French, spoken no doubt with heavy Occitan substratal influence at the time, that are so condemned above by Father Joseph Thoulhier d'Olivet in 1736. On the contrary, the Vendée/Poitou-Charente area varieties share many characteristics with the patois varieties directly to the north of the Loire.³ Simply put, it would appear that, by and large, Québécois French derives from the *langue d'oïl* to the north and south of the Loire River.

These dialects to the south, which belong to the cluster that include the Aunis, Angoulême and Saintonge varieties not too distant from the port of La Rochelle. The breakdown is as follows: 16.4% from Aunis, 7.5% from the Poitou, 5.2% from Saintonge and 1.8% from the Angoumois region further to the south. All told, the colonists from south of the Loire amounted to 30.9%, no small contribution. Note that French Acadia was settled mainly by people from this region. Robert Mineau, in his *Vieux parlers Poitevins* (1986) cites hundreds of Poitevin dialect words which are quasi-identical to common Québécois vocabulary.⁴ This is another indication that dialect mixture was a major factor in the development of Québécois French. Nevertheless, one must also consider that much of the *patois* vocabulary was common to broad regions north and south of the Loire and the same is true of pronunciation patterns.⁵ For this reason, as Yves-Charles Morin points out, one

3 I lived from 1986-1988 in the village of La Chapelle Montreuil in the Poitou countryside at a time when the older people still spoke *poitevin* among themselves. I collected a number of *poitevin* words which, I later discovered, were also used by *gallo* dialect speakers of eastern Brittany near Nantes. It struck me at the time that we should also be thinking in terms of the underlying linguistic "unity" of the *patois*, a unity of non-standard phonological, grammatical and lexical features that are rejected by the standard language, but which persist(ed) in the French basilects as well. A similar situation existed in England.

4 According to Jean-Louis Duchet, professor of linguistics at the University of Poitiers (personal communication 1987), after the English had occupied Paris during the Hundred Years' War, the French court was exiled to Poitiers for many decades. During this period, Poitevin French was beginning to develop its own prestigious standard. Presumably, this had a standardizing effect on the dialects spoken in the outlying districts of the town.

5 One simple example gives the reader an idea. In his *Glossaire du poitevin*, the Abbé Lalanne (<https://archive.org/details/glossairedupto00lalauf/page/n5/mode/2up?view=theater&q=chevau>) writes that *poitevin* substantives ending in <-el> and <-al> are pronounced [ɔ] in the singular. Contrary to standard French, *cheval* [ʃə'val] "horse" is pronounced "chevau" [ʃvɔ] while the plural is *chevals*. The same rule is applied in the local "patois" of Sucé-sur-Erdre near Nantes where I recorded [ʃvœu] (German personal notes, 1990s) where I lived from 1988-1999. In far away, Paris it was recorded by Cherrier in 1766 (quoted in Gendron, 2007, 119)

must be wary of attributing specific phonological features to any given region (see the discussion on claims of an Essex origin for Massachusetts English below).

In his carefully-crafted article, Morin (1996, 243) outlines the major models explaining the “striking facts” about the French spoken in Québec which he outlines as follows. First, he too stresses the “relative uniformity” of Québécois. Secondly, he draws attention to its “relative conformity with standardized French,” implying that, grammatically at least, it was at least partially normalized at some point (either before or directly after the settlement period). Linked to the first two points are the early descriptions of the high quality of French presented above. He then goes on to discuss the different models that have been proposed by scholars to explain this state of affairs:

1. “early adoption of both elaborate and colloquial Parisian speech habits” (cf. Morin, 1996; Gendron, 2007);
2. “progressive uniformization of an early dialect – or dialects – toward the Parisian norm.” He further subdivides this argument into two branches:
 - a. “the early settlers originally spoke a mosaic of dialectal variants that continued to be spoken for a relatively long period;”
 - b. “the colonists spoke a rather uniform koine, distinct from that of Paris, which they learned before their arrival or developed shortly after they settled on the banks of the St Lawrence River.”

I would wager it was something in between.

- The arrival of multidialectal speakers of basilectal French varieties, mainly from north of the Loire.
- The development of one or more koines, composed of a range of paritary to disparitary registers.
 - At the paritary level, this was due to intermarriage with speakers from different regions of France, dialect mixture owing to language accommodation with members of each settlement. These and other factors (the sharedness principle) would have combined to erase many of the features common to the most marked patois in France.
 - The relative proximity of paritary Parisian varieties and those spoken by the settlers from all regions, would have facilitated a blending of dialects towards that of the founder generation.

as *j'val* [ʒval] in the singular, just as it is in modern Norman dialect. It is pronounced [ʒwal ~ ʒu-al] in Québécois, hence “Joual,” the term used to designate vernacular Québécois French.

- Influence from disparitary registers spoken by the clergy and the local leadership, compounded by rising literacy (a separate factor). All of these elements would have combined to encourage the rise of a 17th- and 18th-century French mesolect which would have been preferred as a *lingua franca*, to the local patois, i.e. paritary idioms, that were probably still in use in Québec for several generations after 1635.

Morin, on the contrary, discounts the foundation of an early Québécois koine on the grounds that most of these settlers were probably already speakers of “regional standards” by the 17th century. His assumption that such regional standards existed is very unlikely, in my view, and conjectural (cf. Gilléron, *Atlas Linguistique de France*; cf. Abbé Grégoire’s estimates below, section 2.1.3). Furthermore, even if there was a certain level of conformity with the Paris-area standard, it must have been limited to a relatively small percentage of more formally-educated merchants, craftsmen and artisans, not the peasantry who, on the contrary, continued to speak their local patois.

Such an urban-rural division in terms of literacy levels has been recorded by Contin (2022) for eastern, Gallo-speaking Brittany where, during the last decade of the 17th century, 38% of the population of Rennes could sign their marriage certificates. This suggests, at the very least, a knowledge of the alphabet. In the nearby rural village of Acigné, the statistic was around 5%. These are precisely the kinds of people who emigrated to Québec.

On the other hand, possible support for Morin’s argument of a developing regional standard (owing to increased literacy) may be seen in Maxted’s data for Normandy (Maxted, 2020), a province that had a higher level of literacy than other regions further to the South (to the exclusion of Protestant enclaves where literacy was significantly higher). For instance, during the last decades of the 17th century, 40%-45% of the population in the Calvados region could sign their names. This can be explained in large part by the fact that Caen was a centre of learning but also because the city was another stronghold of Protestantism until the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The Orne region of Normandy followed with 35-40% and La Manche (de Toqueville’s home region) trailing behind with 20-25%. Keeping in mind that men had more access to learning than women, 50-55% of men and only 30-35% of women were able to sign their names in the Calvados (Maxted, 2020). In the Perche, Mayenne and Sarthe regions, the statistics show that only 20%-30% of the population (men and women combined) could sign their names. The big question is to what degree their ability to sign their names reflects a functional ability to read and write and, by extension, does this simple fact ensure they had a working knowledge of standard French that would have been sufficient to normalize their spoken patois? Frankly, I doubt it.

Fernand Legeard's delightful *Et si on caôsait patois! Histouères d'mon Paÿs mainiot*⁶ provides us with a glimpse of the *patois* spoken in general area region from which the Québécois founder generation emigrated nearly four hundred years ago (Legeard, 2022).⁷ The reader must keep in mind that this is a literary work in which the author has made a conscious effort to portray the most conservative speech of the older rural population he heard around him while he was growing up (cf. Waugh and Leith's passages in Chapter 10).

En r'venant d'la veillée, p. 41	
<i>Un souer¹ de Janvier qui fsait² grand fré³ et qu'la ventouse⁴ el' té⁵ forte, je r'venais d'veillée d'chez les coupains. J'tais tout affribaudi⁶, ben tapi⁷ dans ma flôpe⁸, ben encapuchonné⁹. L'ciel y luisarnait¹⁰, l'clair de leune¹¹ il té jaunâtre. La bise¹² è subié¹³ lugubrement dans les cyprès du cimquière¹⁴, les houilleries¹⁵, d'la fersae¹⁶ è donnint une sambiance incroyabe, comme si on allait à la vallée dans les limbes.</i> <i>J'venais d'm'arrouter¹⁷ quan' que près du champ d'naviot¹⁸, j'voué¹⁹ un hardeau²⁰ et une hardelle²⁰ ben jeunots²¹. Y z'étaient bourdés²² au daura²³ du mur, y m'donnant l'appérance qui z'avaint poû²⁴ d'avant la dernière aîtrise²⁵ des gens d'la commeune...</i>	1. soir [swer] with apical /r/ 2. faisait 3. froid [fret] in Québécois 4. le vent 5. elle était 6. froid, affribaudir = frissoner 7. bien enveloppé 8. manteau large 9. bien couvert (par une capuche) 10. luisait, brillait 11. le claire de lune 12. la brise 13. sifflait 14. cimetière 15. chouettes 16. le cri lugubre plein de noirceur 17. arrêter 18. litt. champ des navets = cimetière 19. je vois 20. jeune homme 21. jeune femme 22. ils étaient arrêtés 23. auprès du 24. peur 25. dernier demeure

6 Translation: "And what if we chatted in Patois? Stories from Maine, my country."

7 Legeard was born in a farming family in the Sarthe in 1946 and the passage reflects conservative traits that were typical of all the *patois* varieties (i.e. apical /r/, *moi* and *toi* [mwɛ] and [twɛ] rather than [mwa] and [twa], dialect vocabulary, etc.), just as in Québec.

One very cold night in January, with a strong wind blowing, I was returning home after spending an evening with my pals. I was trembling with cold, all bundled up in a big, hooded coat. The sky was bright, lit by a yellowish moon. The wind was whistling mournfully in the cypress trees in the cemetery, the eerie hooting of the owls created an incredible atmosphere, as if one were walking through the valley of the dead.

I had just stopped when, next to the cemetery (literally, the turnip field), I saw a very young man and a young woman. They were standing with their backs to the wall of the last dwelling place of the people of our *parish and gave me the impression that they were terribly frightened ... *called a "commune" since the Revolution. (author's translation)

Nevertheless, specialists of western French dialects, such as Jean-Paul Charboneau et Gabriel Guillaume (1975, 1983), argue very convincingly that patois speakers between the Perche, Sarthe, Maine, Anjou and Gallo in eastern Brittany had relatively little difficulty understanding each other during the 19th and 20th century.⁸ The linguistic differences between them were/are local but not structural and operate along dialect continua. The same was very probably true in the 17th century as well although the varieties were more marked. Significantly, dialectal continua operated in the same fashion in England as was clearly explained by Chambers and Trudgill in their book, *Dialectology* (1980, 1998, see also cf. Trevisa 1387, Chapter 10).

Until the passage of the Jules Ferry Law in 1881, rendering public education through the medium of standard French obligatory, the levels of functional illiteracy throughout Catholic France were often in excess of 70%, even in the towns. Contrast this with the New England Puritans who passed the first universal education law in 1642.

Having said that, like the English peasantry back in England, French dialect speakers of this period (and until very recently) probably mastered several registers of their local basilect as well as regional interdialects (rather than regional standards) of the type discussed in Chapter 10. This sociolinguistic state of affairs probably reflects the situation in places like Mortagne-au-Perche from which the first settlers to Canada left. For this reason, I am very sceptical about the existence of "regional standards" *per se* that would have been shared by large numbers of illiterate, rural speakers, as Morin appears to suppose. Rather, we probably should be thinking in terms of influences from fragmented

8 For Professor Yves Le Berre, who speaks both Gallo (the patois of Eastern Brittany) and Douarnenez Breton (Finistère), a text such as this is "artificial" and he expresses it this way: "In real life, there are no linguistic frontiers or borders and, in the local markets people were only sensitive to specific (regional) linguistic traits. The seller or the buyer was merely identified as Norman, Angevin or Vendéen (Poitevin), exactly as is the case for speakers of Breton basilects/badumes" (personal communication, January 2026; author's translation).

non-standard, regional dialects from which the most stigmatized or dialectally-marked elements (either phonological, grammatical or lexical) were being progressively levelled or voluntarily expunged by the speakers themselves once in Québec, here again, as a result of Giles' Communication Accommodation Theories. The language of the clergy would have served as a particularly unifying force in both France and Québec.

Citing the work of Chauveau and Lavoie (1993), which Morin describes as the "probably the best comparative study of the Québécois lexicon" (1996, 254), he concludes the following:

a significant lexical convergence can be found between the vocabulary used in Québec and a specific area extending from Lower Normandy (i.e. La Perche) to the cereal-producing regions of the Beauce (only 50 miles from Paris). The authors build up a realistic scenario – based on solid demographic data – showing how a relatively small community of early rural settlers from the Perche (a Province belonging to the area delimited at the outset) may have been the source of this vocabulary. (Chauveau & Lavoie, 1993, 377, cited by Morin 1996, 254, 268)

It is probable that this kind of observation could be extended to phonology and could thus lend significant weight to the "founder generation principle" (cf. Morin, 1996, 39-78). As I shall argue in Chapter 12, however, the first step in the koineization process which I believe was at work in both Québec and British North America was dialect mixing at all levels of language. We shall see that this involved not only the retention of common conservative features of the mother language varieties, both standard and non-standard, but that these remained in competition within the colonial feature pool for relatively long periods without necessarily appearing in written documents. Part of this process also involved is the inevitable introduction of phonological, morphological and lexical innovations.

In short, when taken individually, none of the models or their corollaries presented above is entirely satisfactory. A sociolinguistic approach taking all of these arguments into consideration must thus be adopted. I shall contend that the most likely course of events in both Québec and British America was essentially a cross-dialectal mixture as part of a long-term koineization process involving dialect levelling and standardizing pressures from the clergy and the higher ranks of the literate leadership... Very importantly, I shall also propose the existence of a paritary register of the developing French and English koines which, because they were essentially oral and stigmatized, were voluntarily excluded from the written records by the speakers themselves and restricted to specific paritary institutions (cf. Chapter 12). This last possibility has often been ignored.

2.1.2 A Case of Colonial Lag?

Gendron (2007, 99-166) argues that it is not so much the French of the Québécois that has changed over time but rather the cultivated French accent of today, which he claims arose after the French Revolution. With the nobility and clergy either guillotined or exiled, this traumatic historical event permitted the “petite bourgeoisie” and members of the popular classes to rise, often meteorically, to the highest levels of the social hierarchy of the nation. After 1789, the nature of the standard language was also in full transition as a result of the Revolution. Pronunciations that had once been proscribed gradually came to be accepted in the new standard language of France.

Gendron adheres to a version of the first model presented by Morin and proposes that the Québécois developed a modified, levelled variety and clung to elements of the aristocratic “bel usage.” They also integrated aspects of the “grand usage” which was considered to be more bombastic, emphatic and generally reserved for lawyers and Catholic clergy. This, he claims, would explain the current Québécois pronunciations of “froid” [fret] (“bel usage”) and [frwɛ] (“grand usage”) respectively. Given that the Québécois standard is heteronymous (based on the current standard of France), [fɾwa] is now the model. Note that the traditional Québécois pronunciations preserve the older French apico-alveolar trill or tap which was common throughout France until relatively recently, and not Parisian uvular /r/ (Legeard shares this feature). Under the heading « *Causes de la convergence des accents parisien et canadien aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* »... Gendron offers pages of convincing examples to illustrate his point (Gendron, 2007). This recalls Beal’s discussion about Buchanan (1766), who had commented that the modified standards of Scotland were based on the speech of the local clergy and men of law (Beal, 1999, 64) (cf. Chapter 14) and which could explain at least one dimension of the levelling process that I shall describe for New England, in this case, the ecclesiastical French transmitted by the Catholic Church.

Like his 17th- and 18th-century predecessors, Aaron Marshal Elliott (1886), an American linguist, was also struck by uniformity of the French spoken by all social classes but he distinguishes between relative conservatism of Québécois French phonology and the influence of ecclesiastical French on its morphology.

This assimilating process naturally went on in both directions, *especially for the clergy* (my italics) ... It is particularly the phonology, the mode of pronunciation, that the people have clung to and perpetuated with a striking fidelity, while in the morphology of the language, *evidence is constantly at hand of the very strong influence of the clergy – that is, of the educated element of society.* (my italics) (Elliott, 1886, 160; cited by Gendron, 2007, 6)

This explanation is instructive and reflective of a similar process that occurred

in British North America (cf. Chapter 12) but, once again, it is only part of the picture which I shall now attempt to explain within a larger theoretical framework.

To summarize, it would seem then that, in a very general sense, the variety of French spoken north of the Loire served as an initial basis for the linguistic model which all the latter arrivals to New France naturally assimilated. The proximity of the Perche to Paris gives the impression of direct input from the capital despite the fact that, as we have seen, only 7.2% of the total population came from the Ile de France, which also included the people in outlying areas of the city.

2.1.3 Québécois French: A Fall from Grace

Barely thirty-five years after the French Revolution, we can see that French attitudes towards the French of Québec had already begun to change. This is revealed, for instance, by Theodore Pavie, a famous world traveller, writer and orientalist (and a close friend of Victor Hugo). In 1829-1830, two hundred years after the first settlements from Mortagne-au-Perche, Normandy, writes the following about Québécois French:

Ils parlent un vieux français peu élégant ; leur prononciation épaisse, dénuée d'accentuation [c'est-à-dire de variation tonale] ne ressemble pas mal à celle des Bas-Normands.

They speak an inelegant variety of Old French; their pronunciation is coarse and lacks intonational variation and pretty much resembles the French of Lower Normandy. (cited by Gendron, 2007, 91)

That he should specify “Lower Normandy” rather than “Normandy” is striking and, if this observation is accurate, this would support the idea that their variety of French served as of the linguistic model for later settlers in Québec. This is perfectly in line with what Chauveau and Lavoie (1993) concluded in terms of the lexical origins of Québécois French (cf. R. Mineau’s study of Poitevin-Québécois vocabulary above, however). Gendron (2007, 91) also cites none other than Alexis de Toqueville who adds another vital sociolinguistic observation supporting this claim:

Les avocats que je vis à [...] manquent particulièrement de distinction, parlent français avec l’accent normand des classes moyennes.

The lawyers that I saw in [...] are particularly lacking in refinement (and) speak French with a Norman accent characteristic of the middle classes.

Significantly, neither de Toqueville nor Pavie probably had no idea that the

Normans had been the first to settle Canada during the early 17th century, nor would they have particularly cared. Pavie was from Angers, just south of Normandy. Lower Normandy was a region which he knew quite well given it was on his route to Paris. More importantly, de Toqueville was himself a Norman (from the region of the Manche) and was fully capable of recognizing a middle-class Norman accent when he heard it. These two observations must thus be taken seriously.

Gendron (2007, 99) asks a fundamental question: “What happened during this short lapse of time to explain how the Parisian and Canadian accents diverged so markedly from one another.” He offers the following response which I paraphrase as follows:

- The “convergence” of the Parisian and Québécois accents during the 17th and 18th centuries can be explained by the fact that, despite the efforts to provide structure to the “bel usage” in the Parisian “salons” and at the “court,” the informal register was quite similar to the popular accents of Paris but also popular French accents north of the Loire and in Canada. According to Ménage (cited by Thurot, I, 4), writing in 1672, the difference was essentially that the accent of these elites was much more “*majestueuse et emphatique*” when used more formally in disparitary contexts, that is, it was marked by the deliberate and precise articulation of words.
- After the French Revolution, the divergence can be explained by the rise of a new bourgeois elite which absorbed the surviving members of the aristocracy to create a new ruling class. The generation of grammarians that followed rejected the older informal “bel usage” in favor of the “*prononciation savante*,” which I would interpret as the French spoken by the new “knowledge class” that had arisen during the Enlightenment. From now on, much as Johnson had proposed in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), the French grammarians stressed that every syllable should be pronounced precisely in a way that best corresponded to the written word (Gendron, 2007).

Having said this, I would propose that the most likely hypothesis is that the French of Québec evolved along similar lines as the English spoken in the British colonies further south. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that the high-ranking French travellers’ descriptions of the unity and purity of Québécois French were not conditioned, just like those their English counterparts, by the tremendous linguistic diversity that existed throughout all *patois*-speaking France at the time. Their impressions must be viewed in from this comparative perspective.

Additional support for this contention is found in the Abbé Grégoire’s famous

Rapport sur la nécessité d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française (1794). The first part of the Abbé Grégoire's *Rapport* can be translated as a "Report on the necessity of annihilating the *patois* varieties." The second part of the title literally reads "and to render the use of the French language universal," by which he means that the standard French should be the only language of all the French people regardless of their linguistic heritage. This set the groundwork for a linguistic system which is unique to France, now known officially as "l'exception française" and that, to the present day, denies even the slightest official recognition to minority languages such as Alsatian, Basque, Breton, Flemish, Occitan or, for that matter, to the northern French dialectal varieties or *patois*. We have seen that the dialectal situation in England was identical in terms of dialectal diversity (cf. Chapter 10).

In his *Rapport*, the Abbé Grégoire (1750-1831) also declared his surprise that the French language in Canada and along the Mississippi was also "unified" (*même dans le Canada et sur les bords du Mississippi*, Grégoire, 1994, 2)! This, he lamented, was contrary to the situation in France where he estimated that, of the twenty-five million inhabitants, only three million spoke a form French that could be described as standard. More specifically, for Grégoire, "universal" also meant the new form of standard French of the intellectual class and bourgeois which were in the process of replacing the "bel usage" and "grand usage" of the aristocracy, clergy and lawyers. As the title indicates, the Abbé Grégoire, like Franklin, Webster and like-minded educators in the English-speaking world, called for the eradication of the basilects in order to promote the advancement of religion and, in Franklin's case, secular education (cf. Chapter 14). In this context, it is easier to understand that the French and English observers' remarks regarding the uniformity and the mesolectal nature of French spoken in Canada and the English of British North America.

To conclude this part of the discussion, the idea of a monogenetic Norman hypothesis for the origins of Québécois French is, of course, untenable (Rivard, 1914). Nevertheless, although there is no question that dialect mixing occurred in Québec, the importance of Mufwene's "founder generation principle" should not be discarded either. It must have been crucial in defining the elements of the early 17th-century "feature pool." I shall point out in Chapter 12 that koineization is primarily an oral phenomenon resulting in the merging of paritary registers linked to a phenomenon I have called the "sharedness principle," while increasing literacy results in a drift towards and gradual adoption of higher registers resembling those spoken by the local leadership and upper echelons of society, hence both Morin and Gendron's impression of early Parisian influence on the foundation of Québécois French. The two involve different socially conditioned processes, however.

Geolinguistic factors are also important to keep in mind, namely, that Rouen,

in Upper Normandy and Mortagne-sur-Perche in Lower Normandie are only 136 km (84.5 miles) and 137 km (85.1 miles) respectively from Paris. The point here is that the Norman dialects and the popular Parisian varieties spoken in and around the capital were probably not radically different from the informal 17th- and 18th-century “bel usage” of the aristocracy.

Robert Bouthillier, Yves Davy and Éva Guillorel (2022), musicologists, historians, ethnologists and specialists of the French oral tradition, offer a fascinating parallel to this sociolinguistic investigation. In their study of the origins of the French-language lyrical songs and ballads of Québec, the authors conclude that, although some of these can be traced back to various regions of France, for the most part, the major source area is Normandy and adjacent regions of western France. The authors introduce the reader not only to Normandy’s role in the colonization of New France (Québec, Acadie) during the 17th and 18th centuries, but also present North American variants side-by-side with Norman versions complete with lyrics, melodies, and differences in performance styles. Supported by convincing documentary evidence, this book proposes, that the Norman song repertory formed a significant proportion of the founding musical tradition of Québec and French-speaking North America.⁹

As we have seen, not only did the Normans make up the largest contingent of settlers, but it was they who established the first permanent French-speaking communities in Québec during the 1630s. If one accepts the founder generation principle, this initial Norman settlement was reinforced by the speech habits of speakers who were from north of the Loire, 58.4% in all. Their varieties of patois were not radically different from one another. This was reinforced by an important influx of speakers from regions extending from the Vendée, Poitou-Charentes and the region around La Rochelle. This, I believe, paints a fair picture of the kinds of dialectal input in New France during the 17th century during the crucial koineization period.

As I shall argue below, marriage between individuals from different patois-speaking regions of France, combined with the role of children and adolescents in streamlining the paritary idiom within family and community institutions, contributed significantly to the harmonizing process, a process which appears to have been a significant factor in the formation of creoles (cf. Bickerton’s below). The (socio)linguistic significance of this will hopefully become more apparent in the following sections and chapters. The point being made here is that the founder dialects were basically of similar *langue d’oil* types (cf. the “sharedness principle” below). As we shall see in Chapter 12, in both French and British America, koineization was far more complex and multifaceted than we

9 Robert Bouthillier, Yvon Davy, Éva Guillorel and Étienne Lagrange (2022). *Les chansons du cousinage : Normandie-Amérique du Nord*, La Loure, coll. “Sources.”

might have initially imagined.

2.2 Massachusetts English: An Essex Founder Generation?

In his *English Language in America* (1925, II, 25), George Krapp cites an article written by H. T. Armfield, “The Essex Dialect and its Influence in the New World” (1893), in which Armfield quotes a man by the name of Mr. Gurteen of Haverhill, Essex, who had travelled to America during the last quarter of the 19th century. After visiting the town of Haverhill, Massachusetts, he was surprised to discover that the local people spoke with an accent that he found very similar to that of his native Essex. Furthermore, the people of Haverhill pronounced the town name in the same fashion as in Essex (i.e. [hævəhɪl]. Armfield gave examples such as the pronunciation of “well” and “twelve” as *wall* [wæɪ] and *twalve* [twæɪv] or *a-gooiŋ* [əˈguːɪŋ] for “a-going,” etc. He too speaks of the “Anglian” nasal twang, which is still considered typical of Massachusetts English (and northern American English more generally) even today. After reading Lowell’s *Biglow Papers*, Gurteen remarked that “we might almost say that he has written them in the dialect of Essex.” Krapp rightly tempers this enthusiastic remark by concluding

All this to be sure is not scientific proof that the dialect or the cadence of New England or any part of New England was derived directly from Essex in England... It is as near, however, as popular studies of dialectal relations have come to scientific proof... (ibid.)

However, Krapp was certainly correct in concluding that the intuitive impressions of native dialect speakers should not be brushed off too hurriedly.

Two years later, however, Anders Orbeck, in his careful and fascinating study of the English used in the four New England town records (Plymouth, Groton, Dedham and Watertown), gives a more critical account showing the limitations of this Essex founder generation hypothesis (Orbeck, 1927, 91-92). Without discounting the idea that Essex contributed to the foundation of Massachusetts English, he relies on later evidence by Wright’s *English Dialect Dictionary* (EDD) showing that such pronunciations were not strictly limited to Essex.

Nevertheless, Orbeck may probably have been too dismissive of Armfield’s observations regarding specific parallels between the pronunciation of his Essex variety and the Massachusetts vernacular of the late 19th century. Armfield’s list of correspondences is precise and should not be doubted. What is erroneous, however, is his claim that these pronunciations are limited to Essex. The fact the data corresponds well to Lowell’s *Biglow Papers* is significant.

On the other hand, Orbeck’s condemnation of the word lists made by Gepp, Hoar, Higginson, etc. is well-founded. The latter attempted to use lexical data to prove the links with specific counties of England. For instance, Gepp (1923), in

his *An Essex Dialect Dictionary*, investigated several contemporary American novels in which he claimed to have identified 256 Essex dialect words in use in America (and not specifically New England). Orbeck cites other authors who attempted to do the same such as Grose, Hoar and Higginson. He is more indulgent with Grose and Higginson, who do make comparisons, not only with specific counties, but who prefer to consider dialect regions. He rightly complains that, by associating the words with the “North,” the “South” and the “West,” they do not specify the frontiers of those regions (Orbeck, 1927, 93).

Using Wright’s 1905 EDD as a control, Orbeck (1927, 93-118) studied Hoar’s data, which he claimed as having Sussex and Kentish origins (*ibid.*, 93-95) as well as Higginson’s study of “north country” words in America (*ibid.*, 95-109) and Gepp’s Essex words (*ibid.*, 109-118). He demonstrated conclusively that the examples cited are used across large geographical swaths of England and Scotland rather than in any specific county of England, as was affirmed. Orbeck concluded that “There is only one conclusion: the word lists offered by Hoar, Higginson, Armfield, and Gepp as evidence for dialectal influence on American speech *are all equally worthless*” (*ibid.*, 118). Dillard (1973) seized upon Orbeck’s statement as a basis to reject any possibility of continuity between 17th-century English varieties, early colonial American English and modern American dialects. I shall argue below that this assertion is baseless.

Importantly, a few lines later, Orbeck tempers his remark stating that “The argument from words and phrases, if wisely handled, can possibly be made to yield much of value; but it is necessary to ascertain the characteristics of the English dialects at the time of the great exodus, and the materials here at our disposal are very scant” (Orbeck, 1927, 118). The same is true for the popular French spoken at the time of the settlement of Québec. Dillon ignored Orbeck’s last remark.

Taking a cue from Orbeck that these vocabulary and phrases could “yield much of value,” I decided to look into his data from a different angle. Since all the vocabulary has been documented in America as well as in various parts of England and Scotland, one might consider looking at the data from the opposite perspective. This is what I set out to do. Taking the vocabulary of Gepp, Hoar and Higginson’s word lists that Orbeck examined in his study, I reviewed 223 of these words and calculated the number of times each of these was recorded by Wright’s EDD in each county of England and Scotland in each of these three studies. I then totalled the scores for each county and region. My aim here was purely experimental and, for this reason, these data should be viewed with extreme caution. I merely include this discussion here to demonstrate how the same source and data can be interpreted differently. The regional distributions are as follows:

Fig. 11.1 English regions sharing American rural vocabulary.

The Northwest of England		
County	Score	Total: 110
Lancashire	38	
Cheshire	31	
Cumberland (Cumbria)	20	
Lakeland (Cumbria)	5	
Westmoreland	16	
The West Midlands		
County	Score	Total: 186
Shropshire	47	
Staffordshire	22	
Warwickshire	77	
Worcestershire	40	
The Southwest		
County	Score	Total: 205
Gloucestershire	39	
Wiltshire	26	
Devonshire	41	
Dorsetshire	21	
Cornwall	11	
Somerset	67	
The Northeast of England		
County	Score	Total: 84
Durham	15	
Yorkshire	69	
East Midlands		
County	Score	Total: 189
Derbyshire	24	
Leicestershire	53	
Lincolnshire	47	
Northamptonshire	65	

Rutland	0	
East of England counties		
County	Score	Total: 220
East Anglia ¹⁰	63	
Norfolk	50	
Suffolk	73	
Bedfordshire	13	
Cambridgeshire	0	
Huntingdon	21	
Southeast of England and Home Counties		
County	Score	Total: 319
Oxfordshire	32	
Hampshire	42	
Isle of Wight	28	
Berkshire	37	
Surrey	36	
Kent	44	
Hertfordshire	27	
Middlesex	7	
Sussex	43	
Essex	23	

As Orbeck pointed out, the important thing to keep in mind is that Hoar, Gepp and Higginson's vocabulary are shared over wide expanses of Britain. Therefore, the fact that a given word is attested in, say, Cumberland or Essex, does not at all mean that this is the regional source for its American counterpart. Nevertheless, if the overall regional English score is high, the chances are greater that this could be a potential source area for the American equivalent, particularly if the region concerned corresponds to recognized groups of counties where immigration to America is known to have been significant.

¹⁰ Another problem in Orbeck's approach that skews the evidence is that we have no idea what he means by "East Anglia," given that he counts "East Anglia" in addition to Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. Normally, these counties are considered as part of East Anglia (and sometime Essex)...

The combined scores showing the frequency of shared dialect words could thus be significant. The individual counties with the highest scores are Warwickshire: 77, Suffolk: 73, Yorkshire: 69, Somerset: 67, Northamptonshire: 65, “East Anglia:” 63, Leicestershire: 53, Norfolk: 50... Coincidentally, perhaps, with the exception of Warwickshire, these are precisely the regions which contributed the greatest numbers of settlers for the Massachusetts colony during the 17th century. Indeed, Suffolk, Norfolk, East Anglia as well as Leicestershire and South Yorkshire were bastions of Puritanism (cf. Figs. 11.3 and 11.4).

Warwickshire, with the highest score of all, is a conundrum. The high score may be explained by two factors. Firstly, Warwick was only 97 miles – a few days’ walk – from the port of Bristol. Secondly, it is still largely a rural county even today. This may explain why the dialect vocabulary (often linked to agriculture and rural culture) furnished by Wright’s Warwickshire informants was considerably richer there than that obtained from regions closest to London. Morin (1996) states precisely the same thing for the farming regions around Paris, which he claims were neglected in the *Atlas linguistique de la France* (Gilliéron & Edmont, 1902-1910, ALF), probably for the same reasons.

Inversely, and similar to the French situation, Essex’s surprisingly low score of 23 may be explained by its proximity to London and the urban environment and culture that has spread there over the past 120 years. Nevertheless, Armfield and Gurteen’s comments were largely concerned with pronunciation, not necessarily vocabulary. On the other hand, the high score for Somerset may also be explained by its proximity to port of Bristol which, after 1654, overtook London as the major port of departure for America.

Collectively this presents us with a different picture to that offered by Orbeck, whose objective was, very rightly, to demonstrate the weakness of a monogenetic interpretation for the origins of North American English (cf. Chapter 12).

Fig. 11.2 English regions with highest frequencies of shared American vocabulary.

Regions of England and Scotland	Regional scores
East of England (220) and East Midlands (189)	409
The Southeast and home counties	319
The Southwest	205
The West Midlands	186
The Northwest	110
The Northeast	84

Regions of England and Scotland	Regional scores
Scotland	56

The extremely high scores for the eastern regions of England (southeastern, home counties, eastern counties), can be explained by their proximity to London which, as stated above, was the main port of departure for the American colonies until the mid-17th century. There is no question that these regions furnished the greatest number of settlers during the Puritan Great Migration.

Again, this presentation was merely intended to provide a simple, alternative review of the data and reframe it in a manner that might open the way for more serious scientific investigation. As it is, these results are far from conclusive but, having said this, if the evidence is not simply the result of coincidence, the regions with the highest scores correspond to the broad demographic patterns of settlement provided by Fischer (1989) below, especially for the Massachusetts and Virginia colonies. The Pennsylvania and Delaware colonies present a far greater challenge in this respect. If so, and if treated properly, a more detailed lexical study of the data may yield some useful evidence.

My conclusion, however, is that lexical items are notoriously volatile entities and characterized by their instability over time, both in geolinguistic and sociolinguistic contexts. On the contrary, however, the phonological data Orbeck presents in his book, in particular, the multiple spellings of the same lexical items (hence different phonetic interpretations), provide a treasure trove of evidence that has not been sufficiently exploited. This shall be fully explored in Part III. By integrating key concepts, such as the “founder generation principle,” “the feature pool,” “phonetic range” and the “sharedness principle” (cf. below), with Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram Theory and Giles’ Communication Accommodation Theory and with evidence from these 17th-century New England and New York town records, this study offers a coherent picture of the nature of English spoken by the first generations of New Englanders, and thus of the building blocks of the koines that arose throughout British North America.

2.2.1 Fischer’s Interpretation

Decades after Krapp (1925) and Orbeck (1927), surprising support for this founder generation principle was provided by Fischer (1989, 31) in his *Albion’s Seed*, but this time from another direction. His data demonstrates that, although Essex people contributed a large percentage of settlers to Massachusetts, they were far from having provided the greatest number. He

writes the following:

But closer study shows that some counties contributed more than others, and that one region in particular accounted for a majority of the founders of Massachusetts. It lay in the east of England. We may take its geographic center to be the market town of Haverhill, very near the point where the three counties of Suffolk, Essex and Cambridge come together. A circle drawn around the town of Haverhill with a radius of sixty miles will circumscribe the area from which most of the New England families came. That great circle (or semicircle, for most of it crosses the North Sea) reached Great Yarmouth on the coast of Norfolk, north to Boston in eastern Lincolnshire, west to Bedford and Hertfordshire and south to the coast of East Kent. This area of approximately 7,000 square miles... roughly included the region that was defined in 1643 as the Eastern Association – Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Lincolnshire – plus parts of Bedfordshire and Kent. (Fischer, 1989, 31)

Coincidentally, Haverhill comes up again here, which Fischer describes as the “geographic center” of a much broader source region. Here he focuses on the essentials, and his data conforms quite well with Orbeck’s conclusions made sixty-two years previously. Fischer was aware of Orbeck’s work and his study is cited among eight others which provided similar evidence. Fischer makes no allusion to Armfield, or any of the others cited by Orbeck.

Fischer concludes by stating that the bulk of the Massachusetts population of the founder generation arriving between 1629-1643 came from two basic regions: Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, London, and Kent in the East and Southeast and from Wiltshire, Hampshire, Somerset, Dorset and Devon in the Southwest. This could explain why the dialect vocabulary seen in Figures 11.1 and 11.2 are common to not only the East and Southwest but also the intermediate regions of the West Midlands (cf. 11.2), where much of this rural vocabulary was presumably shared.¹¹

Fischer’s evidence demonstrates that Armfield’s observations are too focused and, while his evidence is certainly based on sound observations for both Essex and Massachusetts, they appear to have also been typical of a much broader region of England identified by Fischer. Unlike Armfield or Gepp, what we are really talking about is a macro-dialectal area encompassing a large part of the eastern/East Midlands area of England, of which Essex was an integral part.

11 In 1984, I interviewed Mr. Kenny Robison, a former tobacco farmer from Thomas County, Georgia, and had him answer the questionnaire to Hans Kurath’s *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*. I was thoroughly impressed not only by his remarkable knowledge of a variety of older agricultural practices but also by the fact that he gave me not only the technical farming vocabulary associated with the South but also all the terms normally considered to be “northern”!

For the population of the four aforementioned settlements of Massachusetts (Dedham, Watertown, Plymouth), Orbeck (1927, 128) identifies the founder generation as being composed of the following groups of settlers: Suffolk 206, Norfolk 98, London 83, Essex 77, Yorkshire 42, Kent 28, Hampshire 29, Somerset 12, Cambridgeshire 9, Lincolnshire 8, Wiltshire 8, Nottinghamshire 7, Shropshire 7, Middlesex 5, Worcestershire, 4 Lancashire, Bedfordshire, 4, Hertfordshire 4..., a total of 600. The rest came alone or in pairs from different parts of southern England.

Orbeck further subdivides the entire number of settlers into regional groups showing that the overwhelming majority of these initial settlers, 500, were from eastern England, while what he classifies as southern England furnish another 95. The Midlands region of England supplied an additional 69 settlers. Collectively, Scotland, Wales and Ireland contributed only a total of 5 individuals. A further 9 arrived from Holland (Orbeck 1927, 131) for a total of 680 individuals. What is striking is how thoroughly English the founder generation was and, relatively speaking, how geographically restricted this English population was to areas south of the line drawn from Preston in Lancashire to Hull in Yorkshire. This is not really surprising when one considers that the two main source areas tend to be clustered around the regions in geographic proximity to two largest ports: London and Bristol.

Orbeck's third and final table shows a very interesting distribution of these settlers in three settlements, suggesting that the dialect speakers, and hence their varieties, would have been quite unique in each settlement. One might even wonder whether the English spoken in these early settlements had slightly different dialectal flavours depending on the population mixes. The koines that arose in each community would thus have spoken different shades of a common variety during the first decades of settlement. Presumably, distinctions were lost in the course of the 18th century.

Fig. 11.3 Population distributions in Plymouth, Watertown, Dedham (Orbeck, 1927).

Dialect Group	County	Plymouth	Watertown	Dedham
Midlands	Yorkshire	10	20	12
	Lancashire		4	
	Isle of Man	1		
	Lincolnshire	2	6	
	Nottinghamshire	7		
	Leicestershire	2	1	1

Dialect Group	County	Plymouth	Watertown	Dedham
	Warwickshire	1		2
	Subtotal	23	31	15
Eastern				
	Cambridge	4	5	
	Northamptonshire	1	3	
	Rutland		7	
	Essex	10	60	
	Hertfordshire	4		
	Bedfordshire		3	1
	Norfolk	9	59	30
	Suffolk	11	130	65
	Buckinghamshire			3
	Middlesex	4	1	
	London	57	26	
	Subtotal	100	294	99
Southern	Wiltshire	2	6	
	Dorsetshire	7		
	Somersetshire	11	1	
	Gloucestershire		1	1
	Devonshire	1	1	
	Hampshire		19	
	Berkshire	1	1	
	Worcestershire	5		
	Surrey	5		
	Kent	9	19	
	Subtotal	41	48	1
Western	Shropshire	7		
	Subtotal	7		

Dialect Group	County	Plymouth	Watertown	Dedham
Scotland				1
Ireland				3
Wales		1		
Holland		9		
	Subtotal	17		4
Totals		188	373	119

*These are the regional divisions of England provided by Orbeck (1927, 133)

The data presented in this figure provides us with quite a different, more accurate picture of the kinds of settlement patterns that existed elsewhere throughout British North America. The overwhelming weight of evidence supports an eastern and southwestern picture of the dialect evidence with a total of 595 out of 680 settlers from these regions. To repeat, because the dominant settlement area was directly to the north and northwest of London, the Essex dialect was one of a matrix of varieties spoken in eastern England that were not radically different from each other.

This kind of evidence also challenges the frequent allegations made by contemporary linguists who tend to stress the chaotic multilingual and multicultural picture of early colonial America, which is more reflective of late 18th- and, especially, 19th-century America.

Orbeck's highly focused account provides us with a snapshot of just three towns (excluding Groton). Furthermore, Fischer's evidence corroborates Orbeck's calculations with regard to Massachusetts (cf. Chapter 12, section 2). More specifically, he provides evidence based on the origins of Boston householders, showing that 59% were from Suffolk and Essex while a further 10% were from London (Fischer, 1989, 36). We can be confident that Franklin's own idiolect was the product of the Massachusetts koine which, I believed, had taken shape by the time of Franklin's birth in 1706.

Having said this, the population mixes were not all the same in each settlement. Twenty-two miles due west of Boston, for instance, only 36% of the inhabitants of the town of Sudbury were from Suffolk, Essex and Hertford while another 36% were from Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire and another 9% from London (*ibid.*).

Orbeck (1927, 135, quoting Usher, 1918) highlights another important criterion and rightly points out that "not improbably, the unfree at Plymouth were as many as one quarter or one third of the total population and during the early years perhaps a more considerable proportion." By the "unfree," he is referring to indentured servants, most of whom were not counted in these

statistics and, potentially, Africans who, according to English law of this time, were not technically “slaves” at this early date. Recall that Benjamin Franklin’s own grandmother, Mary Morrell (1620-1704), arrived in Massachusetts as an indentured servant in 1635 and was purchased by her future husband, Peter Folger, for £20 (£15 representing six-months’ wages!). Both were originally from Norfolk and made the crossing on the same ship. Note also that they both lived in Watertown, Massachusetts, one of the localities studied by Orbeck. They later moved to the island of Martha’s Vineyard and, finally, to the island of Nantucket (cf. Chapter 2).

Origins of emigrants to Massachusetts 1629-43

Origins of passengers in the Winthrop fleet

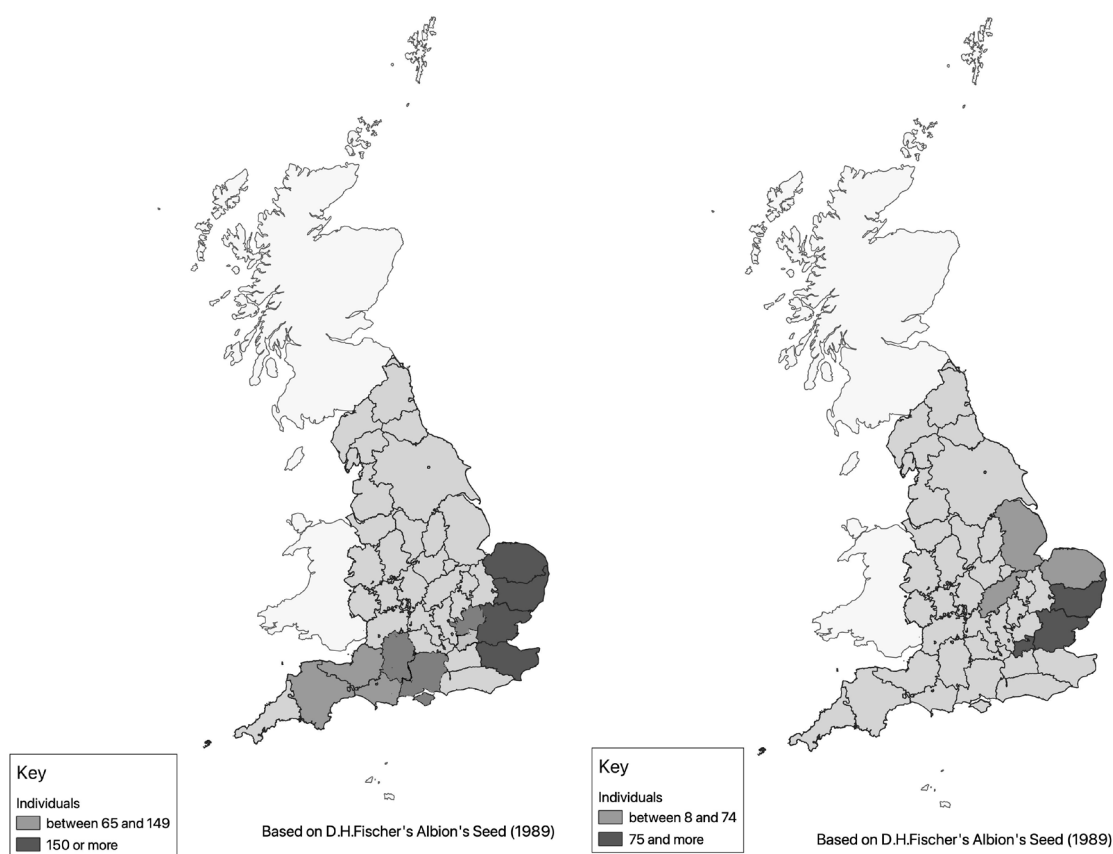


Fig. 11.4 English regions furnishing the highest numbers of immigrants. Adapted from Fischer (1989), by Tanguy Sollicie.

Were there Africans or Irish indentured servants among these initial groups indentured servants? This would be unlikely during the first decades of settlement, although small numbers of Africans were certainly already present during the last quarter of the 17th century and one, in particular, is mentioned by name in the Salem witch trials (cf. Chapter 12, section 2). Interestingly, she is presented as speaking a creole variety of English.

The dialectal picture presented here demonstrates that the founder generation principle can indeed be applied to explain the genesis of the colonial English varieties in New France and, as this study shows, in Massachusetts. Importantly, however, the settlement patterns and consequent dialect mixes throughout the British North American colonies must ideally be examined as closely as possible in the way Orbeck did. Once again, each settlement received proportionately different groups of settlers from different regions of England during the first one hundred years of settlement, albeit nearly all from the same general areas of the South, Southwest and East of England. This contributes, at least in part, to explaining the English voyagers' claim regarding the "unity" of the American colonial English, but what explains its supposed "purity"?

2.2.2 The Massachusetts Mesolect

For an answer to this question, we must look primarily at the leadership of the Massachusetts colony and, most particularly, to New England's Puritan and dissenting clergy. Considering the tremendous normative influence of these educated elites on the people of Massachusetts during the earliest phases settlement, their place of origin must also be taken into account. Fischer (1989, 47, citing Allen, 1957, II, 1252-1281) identified the names of 502 Puritan ministers in the 1580s and their home counties. Not unexpectedly, the overwhelming majority (399 ministers) were from eastern counties of England, and areas immediately to the north and northwest of London: 88 from Essex, 77 from Suffolk, 51 from Norfolk, 49 from Rutland and Northamptonshire, 33 from Lincoln, 30 from Kent, 27 from Sussex, 24 from Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire and 20 from Hertfordshire... Fischer (1989, 19) writes that ninety ministers from these same regions, many of them educated at Cambridge and Oxford universities, emigrated to New England during the Great Migration (see the case of Rev. Allin below).

Furthermore, he indicates that the counties that furnished ten or more university-trained men, who were among the elite, were from Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Essex and London and the London area. One can

imagine that their varieties were the ones that carried the most weight in terms of the disparitary register.

Origins of New England's university trained elite

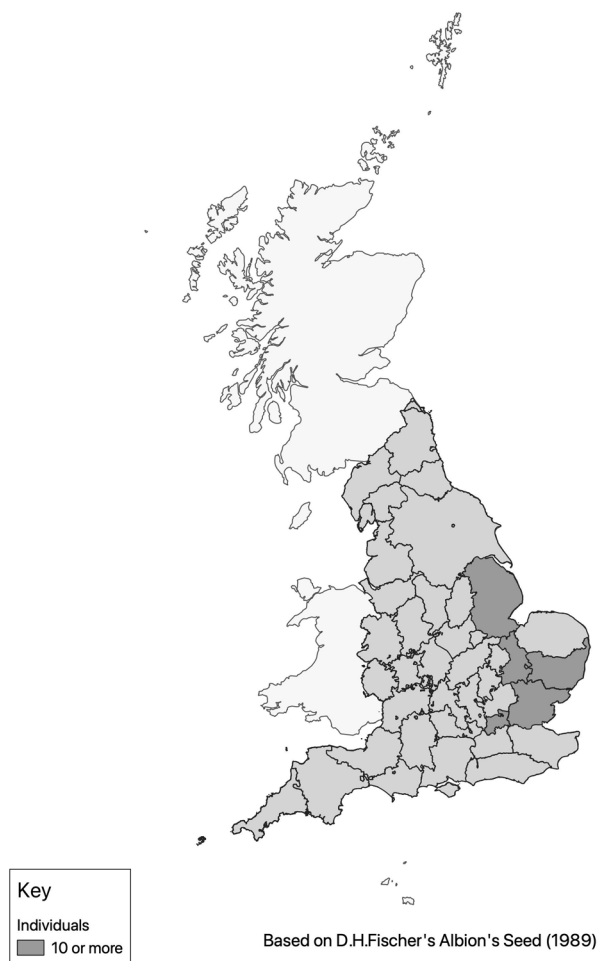


Fig. 11.5 New England's university-trained elite. Adapted from Fischer (1989), by Tanguy Sollicec.

As we shall see, entire congregations, including Franklin himself (Chapter 5), were often spell-bound at hearing the elegant rhetoric of these ministers (cf. Hemphill and especially Whitefield, Chapter 4). For dialect speakers, the mesolect was a highly prestigious variety with which all settlers were familiar, actively or passively, and for this reason, variations of it (perfectly mastered or not) became the *lingua franca* of each settlement.

2.2.3 The Case of Rev. John Allin

A case in point is the life story of Reverend John Allin. In Hill's edition of the Dedham town records (Hill, 1888, 1), William F. Allen, Professor of History, University of Wisconsin, presents what is known about Allin's life. Reverend John Allin was the first pastor of Dedham village in Massachusetts (cf. the early church history of Dedham, Massachusetts, Hill, 1888, xi). Born in 1597 in the village of Colby, in Norfolk, England, just a few miles northeast of Norwich, he came from the focal area identified by both Orleck (1927) and Fischer (1989). Allin, the son of a rich "yeoman" farmer, was educated in the Puritan Caius College, at Cambridge University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in theology in 1615, and his master's degree in 1619. He married a certain Margaret Morse at Wrentham, Suffolk, October 22, 1622. Their first son, also named John, was born the following year. At the time, they were residents of the village of Denton in southern Norfolk.

From 1623 to 1637, nothing is known about the family, but the Dedham records of Massachusetts identify this same John Allin as the "first Pastor of Dedham," where he and his family had settled in July 1637. The following year, he was ordained pastor of Dedham church and he served in this capacity until his death, August 26, 1671.

Allin's son, John, was a part of the second graduating class of the newly established Harvard College in 1643 (and to which Josiah Franklin had hoped to send his son Benjamin for training as a pastor). Afterwards, John Allin Jr. returned to England, where he became the rector of Rye in Sussex. However, like John Wallis and John Wilkins (cf. Chapter 13), he was forced out of this position after the Restoration in 1660 as part of Charles II's vengeful purge of dissenters.

Such details provide a glimpse of the kinds of well-educated Puritans that settled in Massachusetts. Considering his level of education, John Sr. was part of an elite class of ecclesiasts who certainly provided the linguistic model for the rest of the community. The account of his life also tells the story of the tight bonds between Massachusetts and eastern England, from which most of the settlers originated, as well as the constant comings and goings between England and North America. The following account is taken directly from the church records and will give the reader a feel of the unstable social context in which these communities were established:

The township of Dedham consisting of about 30 families residing ther 1637. *being co'e together by divine p'vidence from se'rall pts of England: few of them knowne to one an other before, it was thought meete & agreed upon that all ye inhabita'ts ye affected church co'munion or pleased to co'e, should meete e'ry 5th day of ye weeke at severall houses in order; lovingly to discourse & consult together such questions as might further tend to stablish a peaceable & co'fortable civill society...* (my italics) (1888, 1)

This short description gives additional insight into the kinds of social environments in which the koine developed and, more particularly, how the disparitary register was favoured and spread. The account provided in this town register opens the window onto a nascent community living in a wilderness environment in which few of the settlers were “knowne to one an other before.” Considering the insecurity and fear in which they certainly lived in this new, hostile setting, such gatherings must have served not only to provide mutual comfort and a sense of safety, but also to cement bonds of friendship and solidarity with their neighbours. Of equal importance, these meetings served to form practical alliances that were necessary for the survival of the community. One can easily imagine how Giles’ Communication Accommodation Theory (cf. below), although conceived in an entirely different world environment from those conducted in his experiments, functioned in a similar manner. Indeed, in this harsh social and physical environment, the desire to strengthen bonds of friendship and solidarity must have extended, without any conscious will to do so, to the settlers’ attempts to adopt communication strategies that would limit dialectal barriers to communication (cf. Trudgill 1990).

Indeed, the above passage was written in the middle of the bloody Pequot War (1636-1638) between the English (fought mainly by settlers in Connecticut) and the Algonquin-speaking Pequot tribe.

2.2.4 New England Cultural and Linguistic Identity?

Macaulay (2002, 239) and Schneider (2003, 238, both cited by Trudgill, 2008, 243-244) argue that in colonial situations such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States in which new varieties of English arose, the inevitable consequence was the creation of a new “common identity” in which language was an essential component.

I would stress that, in 17th-century New England, a new identity was indeed taking shape, but it had little to do in any sense with “national American” origins as we might imagine it today. On the contrary, at the heart of this new identity was their Puritan and dissenting faiths and their firm conviction that, just as the Jews had been the chosen people of the Old Testament, so they, the Anglo-Saxon English, were the chosen people of the New Testament (MacDougall, 1982; Griffin, 2000; German, 2001a). As such, God had entrusted them with an evangelical mission to bring the light of Christianity to the darkest corners of a largely pagan world. The uniquely American literary genre known as the “captivity narratives” (Chapter 8) preserves descriptions of Native Americans who are frequently associated with metaphors of hell, demons and the like. Perhaps the most famous of these is the “Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Jenny Rowlandson” (1676) in which she describes a devastating attack on

her Massachusetts village in which all the inhabitants were either slaughtered, including her small child, or taken into captivity. The dehumanizing terms used to describe the Native American attackers are indicative of the manner in which their faith coloured their vision of them:

Thus were we butchered by these *merciless heathen*, standing amazed with the blood running down to our heels... *infidels* hauling mothers one way and children another, and some wallowing in their blood... so many Christians lying in their blood, some here, some there, like a company of sheep torn by *wolves*, all of them stripped naked by a *company of hellhounds*. Roaring, singing, ranting and insulting, as if they would have torn our very hearts out. Yet the Lord by His almighty power... *black creatures in the night*, which made the place a lively resemblance of hell... (my italics) (Demos, 1991, 346-348; for a critical analysis of these captivity narratives, see Ebersole, 1995)

Nearly one hundred years later, Benjamin Franklin painted the same image of the Mohawk, a branch of the Iroquois nation, during his meeting with them in 1754 (cf. Chapter 7).

We found they had made a great bonfire in the middle of the square; they were all drunk, men and women, quarreling and fighting. Their dark-colour'd bodies, half naked, seen only by the gloomy light of the bonfire, running after and beating one another with firebrands, accompanied by their horrid yellings, *form'd a scene the most resembling our ideas of hell that could well be imagin'd* (my italics); there was no appeasing the tumult, and we retired to our lodging. (BF, p. 121)

As alluded above, it bears mentioning that in 1500, Conrad Celtis translated Tacitus' *Germania* into German, one of the earliest Roman accounts of the Germanic peoples during the first century AD. The emphasis on the heroic nature of Germanic warriors, the chastity and morality of Germanic women and the inherent democratic nature of Germanic institutions spawned a newfound sense of ethnic and cultural pride. This new idealized vision of Germanic identity fused with the nascent Protestant movement and morphed into an ideology known as "Teutonism" in the Germanic-speaking provinces. With the expansion of Protestantism from northern Europe into England during the 16th and 17th centuries, and at a time when the "English" were themselves in the process of rediscovering, or more appropriately, inventing their own Germanic ethnic and religious identities and origins, Teutonism took on the name of "Anglo-Saxonism."

An important aspect of this new ideology was the belief that, just as the Germanic tribes had swept away a decadent Roman Empire, so the Protestant Reformation would sweep away what they saw as an equally decadent Roman Catholic Church. Their rejection of the Papacy was extended to their condemnation of the concept of the Divine Right of Kings, part of a belief system firmly anchored in the Great Chain of Being. The religious and ethnic dimensions of Teutonism

were fully taken on board by the Puritans and were at the heart of their credo (Griffin, 2000).¹² Since one of the objectives of this book is to delve into Franklin's personality and the nature of his beliefs, the question here is whether Franklin was an Anglo-Saxonist? I would say that, at least with regard to pride in his English ethnicity, the evidence I have gathered suggests that he certainly was.

In this sense, the New England Puritans shared the same religious views as their co-religionists in England whose unwavering convictions had animated them throughout the English Civil War, a conflict which ended in the total defeat of the royalist forces and decapitation of King Charles I in 1649, the champion of the "Divine Right of Kings." This explains Charles II's ire and desire for revenge against the Puritan Dissenters, such as John Wallis, John Wilkins (both among the founders of the Royal Society in 1645), not to mention minor figures such as John Allin Jr. of Denham, Massachusetts (cf. above) who, for the same reasons, was also forced to abandon his post as the rector in Rye, Sussex.

American Puritans were convinced that God had led them to the virgin New England wilderness to found a new society based on Biblical law and principles. As such, they viewed themselves as the "soldiers of Christ"¹³ in a new cause: the founding of a "New Jerusalem":

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the *Holy City, the new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. (Revelations 21)

In John Winthrop's sermon in 1630, he provides another biblical image in which he presents the Puritan settlement in New England as a "city on the hill" in reference to Matthew 5:14-16, the idea that they would henceforth furnish a model for all others to follow. The metaphor has become a recurrent theme repeated by generations of American writers and politicians until recent times.

Ye are the light of the world. *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid* (my italics)... Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16; cf. Chapter 4)

12 In MacDougall's remarkably perceptive book, he concludes that, after the 17th centuries, a belief arose among German and Dutch Teutonists and English Anglo-Saxonists that the Catholic inhabitants of southern Europe were essentially corrupt, their women immoral and their men unmanly and even cowardly. Romance languages were perceived to be "feminine" whereas Germanic languages were portrayed as robust and "masculine" (MacDougall, 1982, cf. German, 2000b). Echoes of these negative stereotypes can still be encountered in Great Britain, North Ireland and North America today.

13 King James 1611: 2 "And the things that thou hast heard of mee among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithfull men, who shall be able to teach others also. ³ Thou therefore indure hardnesse, as a good soldier of Christ" (Timothy 2: 2-3).

These metaphors are indicative of the profound and all-encompassing role religion was to play in the lives of the New Englanders, including Franklin's, albeit under a radically different form (cf. Chapter 4). Nevertheless, this is not to forget the very real human quest for solidarity and humanity that is born out of common fear and insecurity.

All of this, helps us imagine the symbolic importance of the ecclesiastical standard in their daily lives (cf. first the Geneva Bible followed by the 1611 King James Bible, cf. Chapter 1). Under these circumstances, the idea of a separate "American" identity was not even imaginable at this time and did not emerge as a political or ideological concept until the 1760s for the reasons presented in Chapters 6-9, and even then it was because they felt that they had better respected and upheld the quasi-sacred principles of the Glorious Revolution than their countrymen in the motherland. In that sense, the early Puritans' sense of ethnic and religious "Englishness" remained strong and Franklin's own life experience is a testimony to this (cf. Chapters 2, 6-9).

I would therefore argue that the dominant force in shaping the identity of early New Englanders was their fierce determination to accomplish these goals in the New World but also, in so doing, to create a perfect society founded on the principles of scripture at the centre of which was the "common-wealth." For many, only ethnic Englishmen, descendants of Anglo-Saxons, could accomplish this task. This was the identity of many. Whether this extended to their sense of "linguistic identity" is another matter. As we shall see in Chapter 12, it is more likely that linguistic identity in colonies was primarily regional and associated with current stereotypes associated with their neighbours (cf. Franklin's identification of shibboleths associated with specific colonies (cf. Chapter 14; Franklin, 1739)).

To conclude this subsection, in terms of linguistic origins, if one considers the influence of the mesolectal-speaking clergy on the early settlers of Massachusetts, the demographic data furnished by Orbeck and Fischer support the idea that, roughly speaking, the English spoken in the regions of eastern England defined by Fischer (1989) were the main contributors to the formation of the New England koine.

The disparitary registers spoken by the regional leadership and clergy would thus have been coloured by a blend of English accents of the eastern and southeastern counties around London in particular, hence the 18th-century Englishmen's impressions of the linguistic uniformity and "purity" of New England English (cf. Figure 11.5).

3. “New Dialect Formation” and the Colonial Feature Pool

In his review of Trudgill’s article, “Colonial Dialect Contact in the history of European Languages: On the Irrelevance of Identity to New-dialect Formation” (2008, see also, Trudgill, 1986, 2000, 2004), Mufwene (2008, 254-255) accepts, as I have previously stated (cf. section 2.1 above), that the theoretical principles he applies to creolistics can also be applied to the genesis of colonial Englishes (cf. Chapter 12 for more discussion).

Peter Trudgill’s account of new-dialect formation is uniformitarian, a position I have embraced explicitly since Mufwene 2001, Mufwene 2006, I show how similar the mechanisms involved are to those that account for the emergence of creoles, the basic difference lying in the composition of the contact setting’s feature pool....

The colonial feature pool thus provides new competition dynamics that usually result in new varieties, as is obvious from Trudgill 2004, for instance. In my brand of uniformitarianism, I argue that such colonial settings, in which only dialects of the same language came in contact with each other, differ from those associated with the emergence of, especially, creoles and indigenized varieties of European languages in the fact that the feature pools of the latter settings contain also elements contributed by other languages

Mufwene approaches the concept of the “feature pool” from a population genetics perspective, analogizing “language” with “population,” and rather than “organism” (a traditional linguistic metaphor proposed by the German biologist and linguist, August Schleicher, 1821-1868), “linguistic feature” with “gene.”

With language contact analogized to population contact, individual speakers are given a greater role than traditionally accorded them in the literature and variation within language is made more natural. Like genes, linguistic features are shown as competing with each other for selection into creoles’ systems, in the different, though similar, ecologies of individual language contacts. It is argued here that the founder populations, including speakers of both lexifiers and substrate languages, played greater roles than hitherto considered in determining which specific features received selective advantage over their competitors during the formation of creoles. (Mufwene, 2002, 45-56)

As he points out, while the focus of his work has been on the major lexifiers and substrate languages in the formation of creoles, I have applied the concept of the “feature pool” to explain the interaction and melding of the multidialectal-speaking founder populations that settled New England and the American colonies more generally. As we saw above and in Chapter 10, even before arriving in America, all of these speakers possessed at least two registers of English, their natural paritary (often basilectal) variety spoken at home at the parish level and the disparitary ecclesiastical standard which they heard in

church every Sunday. Only the latter was common to all the basilectal speakers, whose dialectal varieties were not always felt to be compatible for the reasons expressed in Chapter 10.

Mastering the use of the ecclesiastical standard offered them not only a sense of greater proximity to God (i.e. via the language of scripture) but also the impression that, through its use, they were rising to a higher spiritual, intellectual and social level. The end result was a greater sense of self-worth. This is the way I interpret Franklin's own passionate attempts to improve his written and rhetorical skills, minus the religious component, which he nevertheless mastered as well (cf. Chapters 2 and 4).

Mufwene's "natural selection" metaphor is interesting from a creolist perspective but, in the case of British North America (and New France), the driving force behind the natural selection process was not necessarily "natural" at all. Rather, the various pronunciations, grammatical styles and lexical items functioned within developing registers or idioms, and were used in ways that were aligned with the functional and social norms of particular institutions. It is therefore dialectal, social and religious forces that conditioned their selection (cf. Giles' CAT, below) from above and below.

If one considers language from a cross-dialectal, holistic perspective that takes in both social and geographical factors for consideration, the degree of variation is vast, even if one restricts oneself to phonology (the objective of this book). This argues against Chomsky's theoretical reflections regarding "native speaker intuitions," "ideal speakers" and "completely homogeneous" speech communities (Chomsky, 1965). In reality, perfect uniformity of language has always remained an unattainable goal at best and, at worst, a myth. In Le Dû and Le Berre's theoretical framework, Chomsky's views would conform more accurately to a normalized "idiom" functioning within a strictly confined "institution," for instance, an American academic or research institution such as MIT.¹⁴

Unlike Mufwene's creoles, the impetus for linguistic change was largely socially driven, from above as well as from below. In addition to this, a practical component contributes to explaining the emergence of colonial koinés, that is, the "sharedness principle" (cf. discussed below) which played a determining role moulding which dialect features were to be retained. This, we shall see, was a far more practical affair.

In Parts III and IV we shall see that, by the late 18th century, formerly stigmatized features were eventually becoming increasingly acceptable in polite

14 Although generative/transformational linguistic analyses have expanded and contributed to our knowledge of English dialects (and non-standard idioms around the world), the danger of such an approach lies in the assumption that all English dialects share the same (socio) linguistic history.

London speech, and a number of these innovations came to form the bedrock of current RP English. During the same period, the disparitary New England model (i.e. Franklin's idiolect) was characterized by Mazarin's older C1 variety that reached its zenith around 1680 (see Chapter 15 for a description and discussion of Mazarin's scheme).

In the case of British North America, the respective founder generations were composed of settlers mastering ranges of idioms, coloured by regional varieties, that reflected the social and professional institutions to which they belonged. These were introduced pell-mell into each colonial settlement and, in turn, contributed to the creation of "feature pools" consisting of a rich jumble of phonological and other grammatical and lexical elements. Part III (Chapters 16-24) will be entirely devoted to identifying a wide range of these competing variants that existed in 17th- and 18th-century America and, again, determining which ones would have been part of Franklin's phonetic inventory, the ultimate goal being to detect whether his RMS scheme was intended to reflect educated London English or not. My working hypothesis is based on the idea that this is the case. The next question is whether aspects of his New England pronunciation can be detected in his RMS transcriptions? My answer to this is also yes and this will be demonstrated in Chapters 25-28.

3.1 The "Sharedness Principle"

I would like to introduce another concept into this discussion which I believe fills a void and explains a number of heretofore unexplained factors. By the "sharedness principle," I simply mean that, because each colonial settlement was composed of multidialectal speakers, each settlement possessed a specific "feature pool" which, in turn, included a wide array of features or elements, whether phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical. A proportion of these were common to all and actively shared and used, or at least understood, by a majority of speakers, regardless of their native dialect. In the case of Massachusetts this concerned, in particular, eastern and southwestern varieties. On the other hand, this same majority would have considered other dialectal characteristics used by speakers speaking atypical varieties from outside the dominant input group to have been foreign, strange or, as Le Dû put it when describing the attitudes of native Breton speakers towards other varieties of Breton, "ridiculous" (Le Dû, 2019, 202). By a common consensus it was the shared linguistic characteristics in each community that stood the best chance of survival. Those that were perceived to be uncommon, stigmatized or foreign faded away with the last generations of families who used them.

On the other hand, some features judged unfit for use in disparitary contexts lingered on in the paritary registers, sometimes in micro-systems, that were

restricted to use in specific institutions (cf. more below in the discussion on disparitary and paritary koinés) (cf. in particular, the reference to Wakelyn and Viereck's work below).

One example is the ME phoneme /x/ which was still advocated by certain 17th-century orthoepists, including Isaac Newton (1661) during the second half of the 17th century (cf. Chapters 23 and 27). As in modern Scots, he continued to pronounce "thought" [θɒxt], "though" [ðɒx] and "rough" [rɒx] until his death in 1727. Nevertheless, it was increasingly perceived by many in southern England to be both a rural feature (hence uneducated) and/or a northern pronunciation. For that reason, it was gradually abandoned. So, although this feature was certainly part of the initial New England feature pool at one point, by the time of Franklin's birth, it was also recessive and ultimately condemned to disappear. It is unlikely that this was ever a feature of his paritary register or that of his family members.

Another feature that certainly existed in the feature pools of 17th-century Massachusetts and, in particular, in Virginia was the use of *utch* for "I" or its enclitic variant *ch-* [tʃ] which was prefixed to modals such as *chill* "I will." These were made by one of Shakespeare's southwestern characters in *King Lear* (i.e. Edgar, Scene 6, more on this in Chapter 16). In the New World however, this form was clearly marginal in the speech of the majority of settlers and, although the first generation of southwestern settlers might have used it in paritary contexts, their children certainly did not, for reasons explained below (cf. Bickerton's Language Bioprogram Theory).

Likewise, the tendency of Yorkshire, Lancashire speakers and northerners more generally to retain reflexes of initial /kn-/ pronunciations, with variants such as [θn, tn, hn, etc.], would also have been shunted to the side in America. Recall there were relatively few settlers from the north in the three townships studied by Orbeck: 32 from Yorkshire, 4 from Lancashire and 8 from Lincolnshire.

Furthermore, as we have seen, many of the university-educated clergy were mainly from East Anglia (cf. John Allin of Dedham, above), Lincolnshire, Suffolk, Essex, Kent and London. Presumably, they would have avoided any marked regional accents in their sermons that were considered foreign or "vulgar." This also concerns older morphological and grammatical features that had been discarded in the written language but retained until the present day in the spoken vernacular. For instance, multiple negation, a-prefixing and irregular verbal morphology were common in Chaucer's English and survived in the vernacular (*badumes*/basilects) of England until the present day. Although they were rejected in writing, they also survived popular New England speech (cf. paritary koine below) well into the 20th century. Significantly, all of these features had already been excluded from the 1611 King James Bible translation. Franklin only gives a few examples of a-prefixing in his writings, but one can

almost be certain that he may have used it more frequently in his informal spoken register (cf. Chapter 15). Note that a-prefixing is restricted to southern England and the Midlands but is not common in northern English or in Scots (Wright, 1905). The fact that a-prefixing was common throughout the American colonies, including the southern Appalachians, is another argument in favour of the strong dominance of southern English dialectal varieties in America.

In his review of Wolfgang Viereck's study of the bonds tying American and English non-standard features, Wakelyn expresses his surprise that micro-dialectal features still current in British dialects varieties are largely absent in American dialects today.

One of the most impressive features to emerge from this brief survey is that, although characteristics of the British-English mother tongue survive in the USA on all levels of speech, many of the more prominent dialect characteristics, *especially gross dialectal traits in pronunciation* (my italics), have been smoothed out: there is no trace of SW English initial /f, s, θ, ð/ voiced to /v, z, ð, ʒ/, the use of /x/ or /f/ in 'gh' words like *bought* and *daughter*, or the northern dialectal /u:/ in *house* and *cow*. *Neither is there any trace* (my italics) of the -en pl. *housen*, recorded by EDD as general in England except in the north, and be SED from Essex, East Anglia and scattered localities in the southerly parts of the west. 'It appears that the weak declension plural form *housen* either did not cross the Atlantic at all or has since died out in the United States (Viereck, 1985, 265, 293). Many dialect words have left no trace in the USA either or, at least very rare and sporadic suggesting perhaps a more extensive currency there in earlier times. (Wakelyn, 1988, 146-147)

The fact is that all of these English dialectal features did, in fact, "cross the Atlantic" but, as Viereck suggests, they "died out" according to processes presented in the preceding sections. For instance, there are indeed traces of *housen* in colonial America. In the second volume of the Southold town records (late 17th c. until 1787) of Massachusetts (Case, 1884), I counted thirteen examples of *housen* (Case, 1884, II). The New Haven town records offer three examples dating to 1648 and 1649 respectively (Hoadly, 1857); Armfield (1893) mentions having heard *housen* in Massachusetts during his visit there (cited in Orbeck, 1927, 90). Orbeck (ibid., 31) himself provides a nice example of another -en plural in *burchen* (Plymouth, 1663) next to *burches* (Groton, 1680) for "birches" showing that -en plurals were certainly used in early America. There can thus be no doubt that -en plurals were also part and parcel of the initial feature pool. The "sharedness principle" probably explains the gradual disappearance of en-plurals in America and other similar features. Note, for instance, that in Appalachia, "children," is often realized as "childer" (< OE nominative pl. *cildru*) just as in the northwest English Midlands. Such features were also rejected in most of the modern varieties.

Multiple examples of similar phonological traits will be analyzed throughout Part III, and Jean-Marc Gachelin's seminal article, "Polymorphy, Redundancy and Economy in Dialectology: The Case of the Dorset Dialect," provides clear

explanations for these kinds of processes (Gachelin, 1996, 56-71). The “sharedness principle” adopted here provides an explanation of why dialectologically peripheral phonological and grammatical characteristics were gradually expunged from the North American feature pool.

3.2 “Phonetic Range,” a Focused Interpretation of the “Feature Pool”

Let us take a few examples from Orbeck’s study, which will be viewed in more detail in Part III. He shows that the 17th-century clerks were, as he put it, “naïve spellers.” As such, he states that their primary concern was to accomplish their functions by recording an event or decision of importance to the community. What is striking, however, is that the same clerk can use several spellings of the same word. Orbeck (1927, 4) interprets the variant spellings in the following way:

We are accustomed to refer spellings of this kind to ignorance, to inability to spell, to wilful error, to inattention, and to let them go at that. But obviously explanation of this character explain nothing at all: they do little more than state the facts. If we look deeper into the matter we shall find that the scribe tends more or less to express himself in a phonetic way. I am aware that so extreme a statement may seem strange in view of the multiplicity of forms just noted; yet I am convinced an examination will show that though the gross result is variety and chaos, any given instance of naïve spelling is essentially, I am inclined to say necessarily, phonetic.

What explains the multiple forms used by the same clerk? The only explanation is that these are the forms he heard around him and they were no doubt part of his own personal phonetic inventory.¹⁵ For instance, to take only a few random examples from his book, Orbeck (1927, 3) gives *weer* (Plymouth, 1649), *wheare*, *wear*, *ware*, *war* and *wur* as common spellings for “were.” This is what I call a “phonetic range,” that is, “alternate pronunciations of the same word that are heard and used in the same speech community.” In this particular case, I interpret the phonetic range of “were” to be as follows: [wi:ɪ ~ wɛ:ɪ ~ wæ:ɪ ~ wəɪ]. Based on the evidence of “wharf” spelt *whorfe* (Plymouth, 1691), “warned” spelt *worned* (Groton, 1706), etc. (Orbeck, 1927, 41), I would even wager that some 17th-century Massachusettsans pronounced “were” as [wa:ɪ ~ wɑ:ɪ ~ wɒ:ɪ], a stage preceding the shift to [wəɪ] (cf. Chapter 18). Grandgent (1899, 239) gives *war* [wæ:ɪ ~ wɑ:ɪ] as a common realization of “were” in the Massachusetts vernacular, showing clear continuity between the 17th-century “war” spelling and the 19th century.¹⁶ In the latter case, <war> was used in the 19th-century New

15 I have encountered similar situations in Brittany where members of the same family use different pronunciations of the same word.

16 During the 1920s and 1930s, French students studying English were taught that the correct

England paritary register (cf. Dillard, 1975, 1992 below).

Ferst [fɛ.ɪst] and *forst* [fɒ.ɪst] (Groton, 1682) and *furst* [fʌ.ɪst] (Groton, 1666) are other examples of variation that must have typified the speech in these nascent communities. To this last group must be added r-less *fust* [fʌst], also recorded for Groton (1704) (Orbeck, 1927, 31-32, 85).

While all of these forms can be considered as part of the 17th-century New England “feature pool,” the notion of the “phonetic range” is thus intended to provide the reader with a more precise sense of the range of pronunciation for any given word. This is occasionally helpful when considering allophonic variants (but only when the phonemes can be clearly identified!).

The advantage of this approach is that, once the phonetic range is more or less established, it allows us to focus on what I call “common denominators,” that is underlying forms that continually rise to the surface. This, in turn, allows these common denominators to be identified qualitatively with more precision. This is particularly helpful when analyzing poetic rhymes, which is why, rather than opting for a single hypothetical form, I generally propose a “range” of two or three (sometimes hypothetical) forms. At times, if a given phonetic range includes [ɛ: ~ ɛ̇: ~ ɛ:], for practical reasons, I occasionally select what I call the “bridge” vowel, in this case [ɛ̇:], which serves as a “neutral” transitional vowel. Neither does this rule out the possibility that the other two vowels are possible. For more on this, see Chapters 15, 17 and 20.

3.3 Giles’ Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

I first became familiar with Giles’ CAT in the context of my research on the sociolinguistic salience of Welsh-language features in Welsh English as a marker of linguistic and national/regional identity (German, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2007). In this regard, several of his articles were enlightening in demonstrating how Welsh-language features as indicators of “Welshness” (Giles, 1971, 1978, 1990; cf. Coupland, 1988).

Other aspects of his work that I found highly valuable dealt with, and are directly related to, the present question concerning the evaluation of regional and social accents (as opposed to RP), as well the ways in which speakers of different registers and varieties accommodate their speech (Giles, 1972a, 1972b, 1973a, 1973b, 1973c, 1973d). In one experiment, for instance, he had a test audience listen to a prerecorded tape of three speakers, two of whom were vernacular speakers from Somerset and Glamorgan, the third being an RP speaker (Giles, 1971). The experiment was designed in such a way that the three men were to present an argument in their own varieties. However, the key

pronunciation of “were” was [wɛ(:)ɪ].

was that the argument made by all three was precisely the same with each man expressing the same opinions in his own register.

After hearing the recordings, the audience was then asked to identify who had presented the most convincing case. As might be expected, the RP speaker came out on top with the audience commenting that he had made the most sense, with some actually saying that he was telling the “truth.” This was attributed to the influence of the BBC newscasters.

When asked to imagine the three men’s personalities and backgrounds, they described the RP speaker as being intelligent, well-educated, wealthy, well-dressed, having a nice home and car, etc. One woman even imagined him to be “handsome.” His negative qualities, however, were that he was cold, distant, unfriendly, had a superior attitude and could not necessarily be counted on in a crisis.

The two vernacular speakers were seen in a totally opposite light: they were not particularly well-educated or bright, lived in average-income neighbourhoods, etc. On the other hand, their positive characteristics included their kindness, friendliness, good sense of humour, but also their dependability and helpfulness. In this little vignette, we have an excellent reflection of Le Dù and Le Berre’s disparitary-paritary scheme, all nicely rolled up in one experiment.

3.3.1 *Code Switching and Accommodation*

The ways in which speakers are able to instantaneously adapt their language when communicating with their interlocutors is obviously a universal and innate phenomenon shared by human beings everywhere, and this has always been the case. The remarkable thing to me, however, is the way speakers can, in a fraction of a second, intuitively coordinate the most minute characteristics associated with each subtle shade of register, mentally selecting and choreographing the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical data in real time, in a harmonious blend.

As Le Berre (2019) expressed (cf. Chapter 10), the ability to shift from one register to another is determined by the number of varieties (i.e. idioms) or registers of language (or languages) the speaker commands. This, in turn, depends on their social background and life experience.

Despite the fact that most of the early settlers of the Massachusetts colony came from basilect-speaking *regions* of England, most if not all speakers were already accustomed to accommodating their varieties to those other dialect speakers even before they arrived in America. The better educated among these were able to code-switch back and forth between dialect speaking family or neighbours and the mesolect, that is, in either the disparitary ecclesiastical or secular registers. Again, this is where Howard Giles’ “Communication

Accommodation Theory” has been an essential tool, two fundamental concepts of which are “convergence” and “divergence:”

a strategy whereby individuals adapt their communicative behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistic (e.g. speech rate, accents), paralinguistic (e.g. pauses, utterance length), and nonverbal features (e.g. smiling, gazing) in such a way as to become more similar to their interlocutor’s behavior. (Giles & Ogay, 2007, 295)

On the other hand, “divergence” is defined as:

The motive lying behind divergence is precisely the desire to emphasize distinctiveness from one’s interlocutor, usually on the basis of group membership. Following the premises of Social Identity Theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986), this will likely occur when interactants define a situation more in “intergroup” than “interindividual” terms; the former activates one’s shared social identity, the latter a personal identity. An intergroup interaction is when individuals treat each other entirely in terms of their social category memberships... (Giles & Ogay, 2007, 296)

Both of these concepts of convergence and divergence were expressed in other terms in the context of Le Dû and Le Berre’s sociolinguistic theory in Chapter 10.

I would present these concepts in the following way. When two speakers meet for the first time they will instantaneously “evaluate” each other before words are even exchanged. Based on their first impressions and factors, such as dress, behaviour (verbal and non-verbal), perceived social position. Very importantly, of course, once the conversation begins, sociolinguistic hints based on the level of speech (judged as educated or uneducated, etc.), a social pecking order is constructed in the minds of both individuals. In some cases, this process occurs unconsciously.

In all cases, a strategy of communication is instantaneously adopted, sometimes before verbal interaction even begins. If both speakers judge themselves to be “equals,” the likelihood is that they will adopt an appropriate register based on the social level to which they belong (or wish to belong). The institutional context in which they find themselves is equally important (i.e. two farmhands or two barristers...) and determines the framework of linguistic appropriateness. On the other hand, if one speaker assumes that he/she is socially/intellectually, etc. superior to the other, reactions may differ. In this case, the lower status speaker may reveal his/her linguistic insecurity with regard to the use of a suitable register and may lead the person to compensate by using what he/she may judge to be a higher disparitary register.

As we shall in Chapter 25, this strategy is not always successful and can lead to hypercorrection and potential embarrassment if the speaker does not completely master the higher register. Franklin almost certainly suffered from this kind of linguistic insecurity and, while in London, and as a member of a rising, ambitious middle class, he sought to accommodate his speech to that

of the London gentry. By his own admission, Franklin states that he was a far better writer than speaker:

I was but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in language, and yet I generally carried my points. (BF, p. 92)

We shall see more evidence of Franklin's sense of linguistic insecurity in Chapter 25 in his letter to Polly Stevenson asking for her assistance to "correct" aspects of his orthographic scheme that did not correspond to what he imagined to be proper London pronunciation.

The concept of linguistic "divergence," as applied to this discussion, concerns one or the other speaker consciously attempting to exclude his/her interlocutor by adopting a register or idiom which he judges to be incompatible with the social group (or institution) to which his interlocutor belongs. This can involve a higher status speaker rejecting or simply ignoring what he/she perceived to be a lower status counterpart. Conversely, a higher status speaker might be excluded from certain social or professional "institutions" where the latter are perceived to be intruders for reasons of covert prestige (i.e. strong bonds between socially stigmatized speakers).

Giles' language accommodation idea will also be discussed in the context of the developing colonial North American koines below, more specifically, the manner in which dialect speakers arriving in a mixed dialectal community are obliged to "accommodate" their varieties so as to establish greater bonds of solidarity of the kind seen in the Dedham parish (1637) passage above. In such cases, factors dealing with ethnic or national identity appear to have been a very secondary consideration within the first few decades of settlement when nearly all the settlers were from southern England.

To conclude this point, unlike Trudgill (2008, 244, quoting Mufwene, 2001, 212), who writes that creoles are not "created" by their speakers but emerge "by accident," I would argue that this is certainly not the case of the 17th-century colonial koines of British North America. At a practical level, and depending on the institutional framework, the sharedness principle, but also social pressures from within the settlements' leadership networks, contributed to orienting the nature of dialect mixing. This process gradually moulded the ultimate form taken by each North American koine.

3.4 Bickerton's "Language Bioprogram Theory" (LBT)

The theory which contributed to this process of dialect levelling and, ultimately, provided phonological, grammatical and lexical coherence and structure to "American English," is explained by Derek Bickerton's "Language Bioprogram Theory" (Bickerton, 1984, 2016). The LBT theory is itself inspired by Noam

Chomsky's "universal grammar" hypothesis, which posits that infants, regardless of their ethnicity, can learn any of the world's languages perfectly well, simply because the human brain is genetically hardwired to acquire language. The supposition here is that there must therefore be a common, innate human capacity to generate grammar in contexts where it is lacking. I fully adhere to this part of the hypothesis but, as I have stated above, certainly not to Chomsky's theorization of an "ideal speaker" within the context of a completely "homogeneous speech community" (Chomsky, 1965).

Bickerton theorized that the passage from a pidgin to the formation of a creole language involves the creation of coherent phonological, grammatical and lexical systems that is largely due to the innate ability of the children of pidgin-speaking parents to provide structure and systemic coherence to language.

Once again, although the development of colonial America koines is quite radically different from the passage of pidgins to creoles from both a sociological and demographic perspective, I have argued (cf. Mufwene, 2008, 254-255) that certain sociolinguistic parallels are valid, such as his "founder generation principle" and his concept of the "feature pool."

It thus seems plausible to me that aspects of Bickerton's theory can be applied to our discussion. Furthermore, it would appear that the children and, in particular, pre-adolescents and adolescents of the first generations of multidialectal North American English settlers, were the ones who, according to the "sharedness principle," selected those elements from the "feature pool" (phonological, grammatical and lexical) which were judged most appropriate for each register. This accelerated the process of dialect levelling and the shedding of markedly basilectal, fringe elements from the language.

Citing Kerswill's research (1996), Tuten (2008, 261) makes the important observation that, while four-year-olds tend to orient their speech towards their parents and "reproduce variants found in their parents' speech," beginning around the age of eight, children increasingly orient their language to that of their peer groups. By the age of twelve, the tendency to converge their speech to the dominant peer group is even more apparent. From a uniformitarian perspective, this was very probably the case in the colonial settlements. Tuten explains it this way:

We might ascribe this only to changing frequencies of interaction, but it also seems to be linked to children's growing awareness of physical and other similarities between themselves and other children, and a growing identification with these similar others. Even though identity-as-preconceived target is likely irrelevant to accommodation, it may be that accommodation (or automatic interactive alignment) and identity formation (among older children and adolescents) are closely linked.

Accommodation by older children to peers favors their integration into groups and even the reaction of the very groups into which they integrate, and these

groups in turn help to shape their personal and social identities. In this sense, a universal tendency toward accommodation would seem to be part and parcel of the identity-formation process. (Tuten, 2008, 261)

This means that the “formation of community identity” is not a consequence of koine formation “but rather that community identity formation and koine formation are simultaneous and mutually dependent processes.”

I am not convinced, however, that in the case of New England, the rise of a koine resulted in a particular linguistic identity per se, at least as we might interpret it. Their linguistic identity appears to have remained “English,” albeit a form of English which favoured, at least initially, rhetorical styles often associated, directly or indirectly, with the ecclesiastical standard.

Rather, in the face of a scarcity of resources, food and the very real terror inspired by continuous frontier warfare, the development of a common identity was forged by the shared desire to form a unified communal block. The first goal of individuals arriving in these new, unstable frontier communities was to be accepted by the members already on location and be integrated in their social networks. The desire to assimilate in all imaginable ways, including linguistically, must have been their first priority. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, the linguistic uniqueness of early American settlement communities was probably most evident to outsiders.

The following chapter will be devoted to defining the term “koiné” and the process of “koinization.” In this context, we shall see that the koinés became recognizable as regional varieties of several nascent American English varieties by the first quarter of the 18th century. From that time onward, inhabitants from different colonies were quite easily identified by their compatriots according to the form of English they spoke. By this time, social and cultural identities were also associated with each colony. Franklin (1739) offers a few examples of these regional dialects (cf. Chapter 14). Merely on these grounds alone, this tempers the observations of the early English voyagers regarding the uniformity and purity of 18th-century American English.

The point here is that, even though the broadest English basilects had been abandoned by the colonists, shared elements of these were alive and well in North American paritary registers of English (very similar in nature throughout the colonies) which continued to thrive orally within the appropriate institutions. It is these streamlined paritary varieties of American English that are at the heart of modern-day American dialects.

12. Koines and Koineization: Another Look at the Data

Introduction

In Chapter 11, we examined an array of theoretical approaches which, when considered collectively, hopefully contribute to a more refined analysis of the phonological data to be presented in Parts III and IV. These approaches must be used in conjunction with the practical methodological approaches to be introduced in Chapter 15.

Despite the fact that some linguists have rejected the terms “koine” and “koinization,” I consider them to be useful concepts. Section 1 of this chapter will be devoted to providing a more precise definition and justification for the use of these terms.

As we have seen, one important reason for this analysis is that Franklin himself (1739, cf. Chapter 14) actually identified several paritary regional koines that he associated with specific colonies of the American northeast as well as the middle and southern colonies. More precisely, the pronunciations and vocabulary he presents are stereotypical, non-standard features associated with Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and, more generally, the American South. We shall see that several of his examples are still associated with the regions he identifies. I argue that this statement alone provides a strong, but rarely heard, argument in favour of the continuity of paritary registers in the colonial koines, features which are still heard in modern American vernacular English.

Indeed, in a letter dating to 1789, a short time before his death, Franklin wrote of his yearning to return one last time to his hometown. In the same passage, he speaks nostalgically and affectionately of the English pronunciation and “turns of phrase” that characterized the English of Boston that he heard in his youth. This is a clear testimony to the fact that the Boston vernacular was already identifiable at the time of his birth in 1706. Put another way, the process of koinization had already come to an end by around 1700, by that time, the New England koine was already a reality.

In this regard, particular critical attention will be given to Dillard's hypothesis that the British English varieties brought to America developed by the mid-18th century into a full-fledged koine and began to disappear by 1780. For this reason, they would thus have had little or no influence on the development of American dialects. Going even further, he asserts that American dialects arose as a result of contacts with the massive influx of non-English speakers arriving on the continent during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Building on the evidence assembled in Chapters 1, 10 and 11, in section 2 of this chapter, I review the data presented in the 1790 US census and the proportions of inhabitants claiming English origin throughout the colonies. After considering the European and African demographic input, I consider the geographic and dialectal origins of the Massachusetts founder generation and the possibility of non-English influences on the formation of American dialects. The concepts of the "feature pool," "phonetic range," the "sharedness principle" etc. broached in the last chapter will be at the heart of this investigation.

1. Koineization in 17th- and 18th-Century North America

The word "koine," borrowed from the Greek *koinē* (feminine of *koinos*), is usually translated as "common" or "usual." I define the concept as the merging and blending of dialects belonging to the same language in a multi-dialect contact situation that often results in levelling (frequently resulting in the simplification of morphological features such as bound morphemes).

Michael Montgomery, in his article "Was Colonial American English a Koine?," rightly adopts a cautious view regarding the terms "koine" and "koineization," warning the reader that they are terms "to use advisedly." "Unless we are careful," he writes, "they will obscure as much as they reveal" (Montgomery, 1996, 216). Montgomery's own research on this topic has concentrated primarily on morphological, grammatical and lexical features that he has identified in primary sources, especially in the form of immigrant letters. His interests have focused far less on phonological matters (more on this below), which is the primary concentration of this book.

Trudgill (2008, 242) rejects the idea of the notion of "koine" altogether and replaces it with "dialect mixture." He asks questions which are rightly central to this discussion.

It is really very clear why various forms of language contact should have the consequences that they do. But why exactly should dialect contact result in dialect mixture? It is not surprising if some linguists reject the one as necessarily leading to the other – because why should it? Why should speakers adopt features from dialects other than their own – something which obviously has to happen if mixture is to occur? If we define dialect contact as contact *between language*

varieties that are mutually intelligible (my italics), then why would speakers modify their behavior at all in the presence of speakers of other dialects who are able to understand them perfectly well even if they do not modify?

First of all, taking into consideration the passages from Alison Leith (Somerset) and Edwin Waugh (Lancashire) in Chapter 10, it is obvious that there was no guarantee that 17th- and 18th-century basilectal English varieties spoken at the parish level back in England were fully understandable to dialectal speakers from other regions. Once they had arrived in such a radically unfamiliar wilderness environment, the settlers found themselves living beside dialect speakers from other parts of England. Even minor phonological, morphological and lexical differences were often sufficient to inhibit the easy flow of communication, especially among illiterates.¹ Strategies were thus needed to remedy this situation.

Trudgill's preference for the term "dialect mixture" over "koiné" is enthusiastically embraced by Mufwene who also disapproves of the term "koiné" or "koinéization," as if it did not comprise dialect contact and dialect mixing.

Where the populations in contact assume they speak the same language, there are tacit feature negotiations, "mutual accommodations" in Trudgill's discourse (see also Mufwene 2001), which drive the language toward a new norm. This is basically what Trudgill identifies as "dialect mixture," a term which I hail over koiné(ization), as it can help us bridge the two research paradigms I have sketched so far. *My main reason is that "koinéization" has unfortunately been ill defined as "dialect leveling" or "reduction to common denominator," as if the different dialects simply got rid of all their differentiating features* (my italics). If this were really the case, the "new dialects" Trudgill discusses here and in Trudgill 2004 would be too impoverished and reveal no or little variation. As Trudgill shows, just the opposite is the case. More adventurous minds like my own may want to explore speech continua in all the relevant colonial varieties, and not just where creoles are spoken. (Mufwene, 2008, 256)

Exploring "speech continua" is one of the main goals of Part III, Volume II. My position is as follows. Even if the terms "koiné" and "koinéization" have been "ill-defined," misinterpreted or incorrectly defined in the past, this is not a sufficient reason to discard what is otherwise a perfectly useful concept.

My first point is that "dialect mixture" and "koiné" are not synonymous. Simply put, when multi-dialect-speaking English settlers found themselves as

1 I have studied the interaction of native Breton dialect speakers, all illiterate in their own language. When communicating with other dialect speakers, it has struck me that even minor details of pronunciation are enough to inhibit conversation. Those who are literate in Breton, however, can often make a mental connection via the written word, an ability which allows the latter to seize the meaning of words that are pronounced differently. I believe the same obstacle existed among English illiterates.

de facto members of a single settlement community in the New World, “dialect mixture” was the inevitable consequence of what was in fact part of a much longer *process* of “koineization” (dialect mixing) which, in my view, developed over decades along the following lines:

- a. During the first phase of settlement, the founder generation, composed of speakers from different dialect areas, interacted as well as they could. To repeat, during the 17th century, illiterate and semi-literate basilect speakers from different regions of England found that communication was hindered when they employed their own micro-basilects. We have seen that these areas were mainly in the East, Southeast and Southwest of England which, I should repeat, were relatively similar to each other, in comparison to the northern English and Scottish varieties.
- b. This obligatorily led them to adopt accommodation and convergence strategies outlined in Chapter 11. The first step in this direction necessarily resulted in dialect mixture.
- c. Dialect mixture was conditioned by the “sharedness principle,” that is, the adoption of features that were common to all of the paritary idioms and with which speakers were most familiar and felt most comfortable.
- d. Furthermore, many of the better educated (literate!) settlers shared common codes of evaluation common to southern England from where nearly all of them originated (i.e. south of the line drawn from Preston in Lancashire to Hull in Yorkshire). These speakers felt competent to judge and sometimes impose what they believed to be prestigious as opposed to “vulgar” usages. We have seen that, in New England, these were often ecclesiastically-trained clerks and university-educated reverends and men of law and, equally important, their literate wives and family members.
- e. In this way, the disparitary register contained those features of language that were considered appropriate in “polite” company, i.e. for use in appropriate institutions: church, matters of governance, law, etc. On the other hand, traits of language that were viewed to be dialectal, old-fashioned or “vulgar,” were either discarded or, just as important, relegated to appropriate work-related or social institutions (agricultural work, dockyards, brothels, etc.).
- f. Since the ecclesiastical standard was the idiom that was reserved for communication with God, it was the most respected and sacred register of speech. All speakers, particularly in New England, were either fluent in its use or, at the very least, had a good passive understanding of this religious standard.

- g. For this reason, modified *secular* variants of it became the foundation for the *lingua franca*. To the exclusion of the basilectal varieties, all social classes used it, but with varying degrees of ease and fluency. It is likely that the existence of this mesolectal idiom explains the impressions of 18th-century English travellers regarding the “unity” and “purity” of the language of speakers throughout the colonies, regardless of their social class.
- h. Several generations of intermarriages between dialect speakers contributed significantly to the blending of dialectal differences. Couples speaking different basilectal varieties quickly learnt to recognize and accept the major linguistic differences separating each other’s varieties. Their children were involved in this linguistic compromise, the inevitable result being that they streamlined aspects of their parents’ paritary registers that did not correspond to the developing koine they heard all around them as soon as they stepped out the front door.
- i. This is where Bickerton’s LBT comes into play. After two or three generations, the children of the founder generations, and especially adolescents, helped to shape and adapt the rules of speech in each colonial setting. In many cases, since the input varieties were often relatively similar, for instance, between settlers from Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, London area, etc., these New World varieties were often quite similar, to the ear at least, to those back in England. The challenge was greater when any of the latter were married to Southwesterners, West Country people and especially West Midlanders, and North Midlanders...
- j. As we shall see below, this led to the rise of dual-register koines which were used in either formal or informal contexts in keeping with the social function and the institution concerned.

The long-term consequence of this process of dialect mixing, which I estimate to have taken between eighty and one hundred years after the arrival of the founder generation, was the creation of identifiable, regional American “koines.” Importantly, the speakers in each colonial region shared individual codes of evaluation which permitted New Englanders to recognize speakers from the middle or southern colonies, and vice versa.

It is this entire process that I consider to be “koinization,” the result being the creation of a “common” mode of speech, that is, a “koin.” It is these newly formed, regional American koines to which each successive wave of immigrants assimilated. Importantly, the newly-arrived adults rarely ever succeeded

in losing their native regional accents and dialectal speech.² Their children, however, had no such difficulty and quickly adopted the speech of their peers, then just as today.

In this respect, koineization certainly did indeed encompass both “levelling” and the “reduction to a common denominator” in ways which shall be examined throughout this book, including hundreds of examples in Parts III and IV. But this does not obviate the fact that dialect mixing and, equally important, dialect accommodation and convergence (or divergence in certain cases) were at the heart of the process. The end result was the shuffling and reshuffling of regional English language features in a new but recognizably “English” way. Like any language, however, from that point on, these koines evolved and took on a linguistic life of their own. More specifically, we shall see how this affected Franklin’s native variety of English (cf. Part III, Volume II).

At the lexical level, a number of loanwords from Amerindian languages filtered into the regional koines reflecting the reality of colonial life in the New World. However, the adoption Native American vocabulary had little or no influence on the phonological systems developing in each colony, for the reasons that will be examined below.

1.2 Two Registers of the North American Koine(s)

Le Dù and Le Berre (2019) have argued that all western languages have at least a paritary and disparitary register and I contend that the North American colonial Englishes were no different in this respect. One of the contributions I hope to make to this discussion concerns the emergence of not only multiple North American koines but also of dual-register koines throughout the colonies during the 17th century. By this, I mean a continuum of registers that, like light passing through a prism, blended one into the other, from the very formal and solemn to the very informal and unceremonious. The latter also includes taboo modes of speech which are passed down in a secret fashion in specific institutions that have traditionally been condemned by society as a whole. Far from being consigned to two rigid blocks, the registers arose within each institution following subtle socially- and functionally-determined modes of usage.

The mere fact these registers coexisted in each colony and in each settlement of British America can be explained by the fact that, in such a multidialectal and, in certain colonies, multilingual setting (e.g. Pennsylvania, in particular), the colonists were compelled to abandon the basilects (*badumes*) that they

2 This was the case for my own British paternal grandparents who arrived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1920. At the time there were around 40,000 newly-arrived British textile workers in southeastern Massachusetts, mainly from Lancashire and Yorkshire. Their children were often bidialectal, as Franklin and his siblings may well have been.

had spoken in their home parishes back in Britain. As noted in the outline above, this was chiefly due to the fact that, in an unstable and frightening New World setting, cooperation with one's neighbours was crucial for survival. We have also seen that, by definition, the basilects were too fragmented to serve as effective common models of communication. The speakers themselves were very conscious of this. Linguistic insecurity is another factor that will be broached and there is clear evidence that Franklin was among these (cf. Chapter 25). Referring back to the two last examples of Lancashire (Waugh) and Somerset dialect (Leith) cited at the end of Chapter 10, one can easily imagine why adopting a more uniform standard mesolect (or at least attempting to do so) would have been preferable for all concerned, especially at a time when the ecclesiastical standard was so entwined with its secular counterpart.

However, the paritary idioms were restricted to oral usage and, by definition, had never been intended to serve as a written or formal oral medium of communication. On account of the "sharedness principle" outlined in the last chapter, many of the most marked and peripheral dialectal features were quickly discarded from use or simply faded away. This explains why Viereck (1985) was flummoxed that so many "gross dialect traits" (by which he means "basilectal" traits) common to English dialects (he cites the voicing of /f/, /s/, /ʃ/ in initial position) are absent from American dialects.

Among these traits were the use of southwestern *utch* for "I," *chill* for "I will," *ice* for "I shall," etc. Viereck's example of *housen* is another case in point. "It appears that the weak declension plural form *housen* either did not cross the Atlantic at all or has since died out in the United States" (Viereck, 1985, 265, 293). In Chapter 11, I also demonstrated that not only was *housen* recorded in the early New York town registers, but it was still used in Massachusetts during the last decade of the 19th century (Armfield, 1893) (see *sich* "such" below).³ Shakespeare, for one, had playfully used these basilectal forms in his play *King Lear*. If he had not, and if dialectologists and writers such as Armfield, had not documented these and a host of other dialectal features during the 19th and 20th centuries, we would never have known of their existence (more on this below).

With regard to the disparitary register, we have seen that the Puritan settlers were generally better educated than those in other colonies and a great many were fluent in the formal ecclesiastical register. Indeed, Franklin's great-great-grandfather was capable of reading Bible as early as the mid-16th century (cf. Chapter 2) and we can be confident that they were already quite at ease with this register at this time. The unifying effects that this had on their oral disparitary registers is hard to ascertain but it must have been considerable. We have stated

3 According to the OED, in Oxfordshire, *housen* had a collective meaning synonymous with "hamlet," while "houses" was generic.

above that one great advantage of this higher register was that it was very likely understood by most members of the community, and this alone explains why speakers chose to adopt the secular equivalent of the ecclesiastical standard as a *lingua franca*. The effects this had on the levelling of dialectal differences and the promotion of the ecclesiastical standard was certainly significant, for example, in normalizing irregular verbal morphology. Grammatically, the process was already well advanced by the late 16th century and, to some degree, this had been the case since Wycliffe's Bible, which already shunned multiple negation and a-prefixing; this was certainly not the case with the secular standard used by Chaucer during the same period.

The goal in many New England families with social ambitions and strong religious beliefs (the rule rather than the exception), was to impose the mesolectal standard even within the private sphere of the family. Franklin's father was a case in point (cf. Chapters 2 and 3). The reason for this appears to have been the belief that, by using the ecclesiastical standard during private and public worship, Christians were honouring God by communicating in an elevated language they considered worthy of him. As a consequence, the ability to use it "correctly" gave individuals a sense of greater self-esteem and dignity. Equally important, they had the impression that they had moved up a notch in the social hierarchy (the sociolinguistic Great Chain of Being!).

How does this relate to Franklin? Recall that he wrote in his *Autobiography* that he could not remember a time when he could not read. By the age of eight, he was already well-versed in the ecclesiastical standard and, thanks to his singular intelligence, this explains why his parents and his uncle Benjamin oriented him towards the clergy. Franklin recalls that his father, Josiah, even made a pun that Franklin, his tenth child, would be given as a "tithe" to the church. "I was put to the grammar-school at eight years of age, my father intending to devote me, as the tithe of his sons, to the service of the Church" (BF, p. 10).

At the age of twenty, Franklin wrote his "Art of Virtue" (1726) and, at only twenty-two, his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion* (1728) demonstrated his perfect command of the ecclesiastical register. We have also seen that, as a young adolescent, he had already understood that mastering the written and spoken secular standard of English was the key to moving up the social ladder. In Chapters 4 and 5, we saw that he was mesmerized by the rhetorical styles of written English that were popular in London, in particular in Addison and Steele's *Spectator* (vol. 3, 1711) which served as a model for him. This was another sign that Franklin wanted nothing to do with the lower paritary registers and he strived his entire life to perfect his command of this disparitary register (cf. Chapter 14). We shall see that, in Franklin's writings, he could move seamlessly from the secular to the ecclesiastical registers when the occasion called for it (cf. his *Plain Truth*, 1747). His mastery of pronunciation appears to have been less

well defined in his own mind (cf. Chapter 25, Volume II).

To summarize, upon their arrival in the North American colonial settlements, English dialect speakers adopted strategies favouring linguistic convergence. This resulted in the purging of the most marked dialectal features that differentiated their own speech from that of their neighbours. The traits which disappeared quickest were those that were so dialectal or stigmatized as to impede communication and/or cause them embarrassment. This provides a tentative answer to Trudgill's question: "*why would speakers modify their behavior at all in the presence of speakers of other dialects* (my italics) who are able to understand them perfectly well even if they do not modify?" (Trudgill, 2008, 242).

Simply put, the secular mesolect was encouraged in public social encounters given that it was this variety that was best understood and deemed to be the worthiest of imitation by speakers from all the regions of England.

1.3 Dillard's Hypothesis

J. L. Dillard (1975, 50) is perhaps the foremost spokesman for linguists who have argued that the uniformity that characterized colonial American English resulted from the early erasing of dialectal differences among the British settlers and that a "full koine stage" had already had been reached by the middle of the 18th century. He then argues that this full koine stage had disappeared by the end of the 18th century as a result of contacts with massive numbers of non-English-speaking immigrants. Here his facts and chronology are wrong, however. According to him, it is these language contacts with massive numbers of non-English speakers that explain the origins of American dialects during the 19th century.

Statements as to the uniformity of American English being rare by the end of the eighteenth century, and indeed overt statements to the contrary becoming commonplace along about that time, it seems inescapable that the "pure" koine situation flourished in the eighteenth century and was gone by the end of that period. (Dillard, 1973, 176)

In the first phrase of this passage, Dillard alludes to the fact that "uniformity of American English" was "rare" by the end of the 18th century. The fact is that variation had always been a feature of colonial American English, particularly in the 17th century. The town records, which he purportedly examined, offer stark proof of this. What he seems to be neglecting here is that all the koines (not only one) contained paritary oral registers and non-standard features. The latter flourished as they always had, that is, in appropriate social institutions. For the reasons described here, the most marked dialectal features had been cast aside. The development of the disparitary registers developed as a result of

the ecclesiastical and secular oral influences, the church and local leadership, but also from increasing literacy.

That a “pure koine” situation could have flourished in the 18th century, reaching a climax around 1750 before disappearing thirty to fifty years later, is difficult to fathom for the good reason that, to repeat, right from the beginning, there was not only one colonial “koiné” in America but rather several regional ones (with slight variations in the different settlements), as well as disparitary and paritary registers of each as presented in Chapter 11.

Secondly, I would push the date back for the establishment of these koinés to as early as 1700-1725, especially in long-established colonies like Massachusetts and Virginia. The first settlements here date to 1620 and 1607 respectively. My reason for proposing such an early date, as stated in the introduction, is based on the fact that Franklin himself gives clear evidence to their existence in a document written in 1739 in which he presents a number of fascinating non-standard regional stereotypes and then names the colonies where they were used (cf. Chapter 14 for details). Again, Franklin’s examples prove the existence of the non-standard, paritary, oral registers of the new American English koinés which were inherited during the 17th-century settlement period. In all likelihood, the origins of American dialects are to be found in these 17th- and 18th-century vernacular idioms.

Webster provides further evidence of this when he gives over a hundred pages of examples of American non-standard regionalisms in his *Dissertations of the English Language* (1789), examples which he identifies with New England, the middle states as well as Virginia and the South more generally. He describes many of these as “vulgar,” but stresses that they were used formerly in England during the times of Chaucer and Shakespeare, thus showing that these oral forms had long histories in both England and America. If he situates these regionalisms so precisely with speakers from specific colonies, this can only mean that there was not just one American “koiné,” as is commonly stated, but rather multiple ones, each having its range of registers going from the disparitary to the paritary. In Chapters 14, 29 and 30, we shall examine Franklin and Webster’s prescriptive attitudes and how they viewed such non-standard features to be abominations that should be extirpated from “polite” speech (cf. see Webster’s example of *sich* “for such.” as an example of continuity).

Montgomery (1996, 231-232) suggests that what Dillard understood to be “koinéization” was in reality the increasing uniformization of American English, resulting from the spread of literacy. In arriving at this conclusion, Montgomery points out that Dillard was concerned primarily with the formal written language and the disparitary spoken registers. However, Montgomery’s research focuses on non-standard characteristics, mainly grammatical and lexical, in contemporary written documents of all kinds and he certainly must

have assumed the existence of such paritary colonial registers.

These non-standard varieties left few traces in the written language, but the full extent of their existence began to emerge during the 19th century when dialectologists began studying them and authors such as James R. Lowell, Mark Twain, D. H. Lawrence, Sir Walter Scott, William Barnes, Edwin Waugh and many others began producing works of literature written in dialect, a literary revolution at the time that was criticized by many.

Although their work needed re-examining, one of the most striking aspects of Dillard's work is his sweeping dismissal of the in-depth, rigorous research undertaken by researchers such as Krapp (1925) and Orbeck (1927). For instance, with regard to Orbeck's book, he writes:

All in all, Orbeck presents very little evidence for the representation of British "regional" dialects, in any meaningful way, in the early town records of Massachusetts. In the context of defending the legitimacy of American English-and of linguistic change, Orbeck and others like him may be considered praiseworthy. Our respect for them should not, however, go so far as to commit ourselves to *their rather shaky (and, in the case of Orbeck, reluctantly drawn) specific conclusions about the British provenience of American dialect forms.* (my italics) (Dillard, 1973, 180)

Two decades later, Dillard's views remained unchanged. In his book, *A History of American English* (1992, 35), Dillard goes so far as to write:

It has not been possible, however, to identify the colonial dialects with any of the varieties of England - or those of Ireland or Scotland. *Attempted reconstruction of the English of the American colonies has yielded virtually no insight into the English of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.* (my italics)

Montgomery (1996, 216) summarizes Dillard's arguments in the following manner. "American dialects diversified into regional dialects largely in the 19th century as a result of contact with other languages (southern American speech derives its distinctiveness from contacts with African languages) ... He criticizes attempts to trace varieties of American English to the British Isles... as misguided, misleading and unproductive."⁴

1.4 *Sich*: An Example of Continuity

Evidence supporting the hypothesis of the continuity⁵ of regional colonial paritary varieties of colonial English down to the present day is to be found at

4 For a powerful refutation of Dillard's position on the origins of African American English, see Sarah G. D'Eloia's "Issues in the Analysis of Nonstandard Negro English: A Review of J. L. Dillard's *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States*," March 1, 1973 Review Article for the *Journal of English Linguistics*, 87-105.

5 I shall use the term "continuity" throughout the book, along with oral transmission, to stress this point.

all levels. Just one example, out of the hundreds which will be presented in Parts III and IV, demonstrates the unbroken link between 17th-century English dialects and their streamlined American offspring. The example to be examined here concerns the word “such.”

Chaucer, a Londoner, wrote *swich(e)* for “such.” The same word is recorded by Sir Thomas Smith (1568) under the form of *sich* (his father was from Essex and mother from Lancashire).

Webster (1789, 388-389) was a native of Connecticut, settled mainly by Essex people (Fischer, 1989, 32). He states that *sich* was very common in “vulgar” American speech in all of the states. The Bostonian, James R. Lowell, gives *sech* as a variant of *sich*, using it sixteen times in his *Biglow Papers* (1848).

Wright (1905, 626) gives *sech* for the counties of Norfolk, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire at the beginning the 20th century, while he records *sich* as being in common use throughout all of the northern counties of England including Yorkshire and Lancashire but, more importantly for our Massachusetts data, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Northamptonshire (Franklin’s father’s home county), Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, Kent, Surrey, Hampshire, Dorset, Devonshire, Cornwall as well as areas of the West Midlands (Wright, 1905, 626).

Finally, Hall (1942, 40) records *sich* for the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, showing that it is a clear survival from colonial times. Shorrocks (1998, 217) also gives *sich* for Bolton, Lancashire, showing that it was still used only two decades ago and, perhaps, to this day by older speakers. A large number of similar examples demonstrate the same kind of continuity between early English and the American varieties. The “phonetic range” found in the colonial “feature pool” for this word was thus [sɪʃ ~ setʃ] and, as we shall see, [sɹʃʃ], in more formal Massachusetts English. The latter was most likely Franklin’s pronunciation of the word (cf. Chapter 23). Webster may already have pronounced it [sɹʃʃ].

Yet, with such abundant proof of continuity between British and American English at all levels of grammar (cf. Viereck, 1985), it is hard to understand how or why Dillard (1992, 30) would insist that “modern regional varieties in America have little to do with the input of seventeenth-or early eighteenth-century settler English, but arose instead in the ‘early National period’.” If this had truly been the case, American-English would now resemble an English-based “creole.” Furthermore, his hypothesis cannot explain why standard or non-standard varieties of North American English are so closely aligned in so many respects with both British and Hiberno-English English (Viereck, 1985).

As can be gathered from the title of his book, *All-American English* (1975), Dillard’s approach emphasizes “Americanness” in ways reminiscent of Mencken’s *The American Language* (1919). Nearly two decades later, he writes:

If it was true that the English-speaking immigrants became astonishingly unified in their use of English.... Levelling the dialects they brought from England, the

seeds of a new diversity would have been sown by interaction with the Indians and the other groups which made up the extremely polyglot environment of the colonies, the new nation and especially the frontier. (Dillard, 1992, 30)

While I do not dispute that there were numerous creole speakers in colonial America, I would also argue that these speakers generally interacted with settlers living on the geographic and social fringes of the colonial world. For these linguistic groups to have had a significant influence on the development of paritary and especially disparitary American English, Africans or Native Americans, for instance, would have had to be sufficiently numerous and, more importantly, socially integrated and respected in the 17th- and 18th-century English settlements. The apartheid-like caste system that reigned in colonial America from the 17th century onwards (cf. the section on demographics below) certainly limited the scope of this kind of lasting linguistic influence at a time when even intermarriage was tacitly forbidden.

Dillard's rejection of the English element in American English appears to be founded on Orbeck's own remarks regarding the "worthlessness" of Gepp, Higginson and Hoar's monogenetic interpretations of the origins of American English which, as we have seen, were studies founded on very naïve premises (cf. Chapter 11). Nevertheless, we also saw that Orbeck (1927, 118) immediately softened his criticism a few lines later, stating that, if intelligently exploited, the lexical data outlined in the preceding chapter could indeed yield much valuable information.

1.5 Identifying the Elements of the "Feature Pool"

From my perspective, if one examines Orbeck's data and sources in detail, that is, the multiple misspellings of the 17th-century town scribes for any given word, this evidence reflects an equivalent number of phonetic representations of potentially variant realizations that were used by individuals cohabiting within the four colonial communities of Massachusetts studied by Orbeck (Watertown, Groton, Plymouth and Dedham). As such, we have at our disposal a wonderful laboratory for the exploration of colonial American English. Taken in conjunction with the observations made by contemporary English orthoepists, it provides wonderful corroborating evidence showing the common linguistic bonds between Massachusetts and 17th-century England.

Indeed, this evidence is of the greatest value imaginable for the diachronic linguist in the sense that we have a window onto the 17th-century New England "feature pool." This means that, thanks to these data, we can reconstruct the "phonetic ranges" for a host of individual words such as "such" [sitʃ ~ setʃ ~ satʃ ~ sɪtʃ] discussed above or "fetch" *fitch* [fɪtʃ] ~ *fetch* [fetʃ] ~ *foch* [fotʃ ~ fɪtʃ], "length" *lingth* [lɪŋkθ] ~ *length* [lɛŋkθ] ~ *lankth* [læŋkθ] and "were" *weer* [wi:ɹ],

ware [wɛ:ɪ ~ wæ:ɪ], *wur* [wəɪ] and so on. In this way, we can determine not only the competing elements of the “feature pool” in a relatively systematic fashion, but also the ones that came to be dominant (cf. Mufwene’s remark on “speech continua” above).

In addition, it is interesting to note that *all* of these pronunciations were once commonly heard among the first generations of settlers but, equally important, these forms were still used in the modern dialects of England, and to a lesser degree America, until a few years ago. For this reason, a more systematic exploitation of 19th- and 20th-century dialect data is imperative in these discussions (cf. Chapter 15).

In essence, the “phonetic ranges” that have just been cited provide us with priceless insight into the koineization process itself, that is, the process of “dialect mixing” and the inevitable fusion that resulted in the creation of a relatively unified linguistic system. For the reasons associated with social/sociolinguistic hierarchies outlined in Chapters 1 and 10, this approach permits us to understand why some forms were retained while others were rejected. Taken collectively, the phonetic elements composing these phonetic ranges can be seen as the building blocks of the emerging phonological systems of the 17th-century New England koine.

It is thus quite evident that Franklin himself, as a child, would have heard many if not all of the variant forms cited above. For social reasons explained in Part I, it is equally certain that he sought to distance himself from those pronunciations which he considered to be “vulgar” dialectal forms. For this reason, the approach adopted here provides us with far more factual, if chaotic, snapshots identifying the major features of Franklin’s idiolect (passively understood or actively employed) than would have otherwise been possible.

1.6 The Continuity of Basilectal Grammatical Features

I have argued that, at the time of Franklin’s birth in 1706, the new American paritary varieties had largely shed many of the most marked morphological characteristics of the older English basilects. These paritary idioms were used within restricted social environments and institutional settings where their survival is likely to have been due to covert prestige among speakers belonging to the lower strata of society. In this section, we see grammatical parallels with the phonological data discussed above and to be outlined in Parts III and IV. I hasten to add, however, that the conservatism in certain relic areas of North America presented below are also accompanied, as would be expected by innovative features.

As explained in Chapters 10 and 11, because the non-standard registers were frowned upon, they were avoided in public contexts and especially in writing.

The point is that they continued to be used “under the radar,” giving the false impression that the paritary register did not exist at all during the early colonial period. The testimonies of the English (and French) visitors to North America only reinforced this impression. We have seen that there is much truth in this, but the claims are exaggerated for the reasons explained above.

If it is true that a large array of non-standard morphological features in modern American English are also shared by the modern varieties of England (Viereck, 1985), the opposite is not true. We have seen that many, if not most, of the “gross dialectal traits” have disappeared from American non-standard English. Grammatically, some of the features they do share are as follows:

a-prefixing: preverbal particle (a- < OE on, in) + V-ing:

- I kill’d the slave that was *a-hanging* thee (1605, Shakespeare, *King Lear*).
- That’s the first I ever *heard* of that; a man *a-eatin’* owl and hit *a-curing* him! (Maggie Hammons, West Virginia: see Fleischhauer, 1973).

a-prefixing: preverbal particle (a- < OE ge-) + past participle:

- Lo, Lord, my lady hath my deeth *y-sworn* (Chaucer, “Franklin’s Tale”).
- If I held one leg and Lilly had the head, a-holdin’ it *a-stretched* out⁶ (West Virginia; see Wolfram and Christian, 1976, 74).

Irregular verbal morphology (cf. Chapter 14 for Franklin’s criticism of this in *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, 1739):

- And thereupon these errors are *arose* (Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*).
- Thou hast *eat* thy bearer up (Shakespeare, *Henry IV*).⁷
- We were *holp* hither (Shakespeare, *The Tempest*).⁸
- Where have I *took* them up (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*).
- Have you *chose* this man? (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*).⁹
- I *drunk* him to his bed (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*).
- You have *swam* (Shakespeare, *As You Like it*).
- I have *spake* (Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*).
- We had *droven* them home (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*).

6 This is still current in spoken vernacular American English in contexts such as: “If I hadn’t a-known,” “If I hadn’t a-been there,” “If I hadn’t a-told her...” i.e. [hædnə] + past participle.

7 Compare the extract below (from Fleischhauer, 1973).

8 “Holp” is an irregular verbal form that is still heard in the Appalachian Mountains alongside “holped.”

9 Shakespeare gives *wrote* or *writ* for “written,” *rode* for “ridden,” *smit* for “smitten,” *strove* for “striven,” *drove* for “driven”...

With the exception of the last two examples, all of these can be heard in modern-day Appalachian English and were certainly commonly heard in Massachusetts in Franklin's day, hence his teasingly derisive remark about the use of such irregularities: "Brutes shall speak in many places, and there will be about *seven and twenty irregular verbs* made this year, if Grammar *don't* interpose" (Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanack*, 1739; for more examples, see Christian & Wolfram, 1976, 83-84).

- He's the one that *eat* the hoot owl (Maggie Hammons, West Virginia; see Fleischhauer & Jabbour, 1973).
- She shoulda *took* it with her (German, personal notes, southwestern Ohio, 2022).
- He mighta *went* home already (German, personal notes, southwestern Ohio 2022).

Perfective done: (have) + done + past participle:

- I have *doon* dewely *examyned* the instrument (15th c., Paston family letters, Norfolk England) .
- ... She *done* throwed herself plumb to the dogs... (Christian & Wolfram, 1976, 88).

The personal dative:

- And they said, Go to, let us *build us* a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us *make us* a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (Genesis 11:4).
- I shot *me* a pheasant (Christian & Wolfram, 1976, 198, 123).

Multiple negation:

- He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde.
- In al his lyf unto no maner wight (Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, Prologue, ll. 70-71).
- He *won't* never come back here *no* more (German, personal notes, Kentucky, 2022).

All of these features found in Appalachian English today are attested in Middle English and Early Modern English. Significantly, although multiple negation was an integral characteristic of Chaucer's English, it was already avoided in writing as early as the late Middle Ages (Nevalainen, 1996). The other examples above, with the exception of a few uses of the personal dative, are absent from the 1611 King James Bible, showing that they too were stigmatized by the end of the 16th century. And yet they are still common in non-standard American English today.

The conclusion is inescapable; these grammatical characteristics are directly inherited from the earlier paritary American colonial koines. Further proof can be seen in Lowell's *Biglow Papers* (1848) which show the same kinds of traits (cf. Krapp's observations below).

I hasten to add that I am certainly not saying that American English has not evolved since colonial times. Quite the contrary. My point is that the point of departure was the dual-register regional koines that were already established and recognizable to colonial speakers during the first quarter of the 18th century. Without a shadow of a doubt, the major characteristics of both standard and non-standard features of mainstream American English varieties are part of an unbroken historical inheritance reaching back to 17th-century England itself. This will become more evident when the phonological data is analyzed in Parts III and IV, Volume II.

2. The Demographics of Colonial America

In some respects, Montgomery leans in favour of Dillard's analysis in that he too stresses the multilingual nature of the colonial settlements:

The linguistic complexity of colonial North America can hardly be overstated, especially in the middle colonies from New York south to Maryland and in the southern colony of South Carolina. To the Delaware Valley came the widest variety of Europeans (Dutch, Swedes, Germans, Welsh, Scots, English, and Irish), as well as Africans. (Montgomery, 1996, 214)

I have no problem with this at all. It is a simple fact. However, as J. H. Fisher (2001, 60-61) rightly points out, "*the non-English influences Dillard brings forwards are nearly all post 1800*" (my italics). For this reason alone, his arguments are largely irrelevant to the discussion about the origins of the colonial koines that had taken shape by around 1700. These reservations are not meant to deny the important and valid question that Dillard ultimately poses, namely, to what extent and in which ways did the massive influx of foreign-language-speaking immigrants arriving after the American Revolution and throughout the 19th century alter the nature of the original American disparitary and paritary koines? Although answering this question lies outside the scope of this book, I would simply say that the demographic details, the social apartheid system that existed and his erroneous dating of the arrival of the mass of non-English-speaking immigrants tend to weaken Dillard's claims very considerably.

In Chapter 1, I briefly traced the cultural and geographic origins of the English dissenters who settled Massachusetts in the early 17th century and, in Chapter 11, we also examined Orbeck's analysis of the origins of the four Massachusetts settlements which, in my view, show the close bonds linking the New Englanders

with eastern and southwestern England in particular and, to a lesser degree, to the West Midlands (and not to any specific county). This ties in well with the arguments presented above: these koines represented mixes of varieties (“dialect mixture”), resulting both paritary and disparitary English varieties. We also saw in Part I that Franklin’s family were part and parcel of the same rebellious cultural tradition with its roots anchored in the Lollard tradition of social and religious contestation. Let us look a little more closely at some of the data obtained from the earliest American census records.

2.1 The New England Colonies

If we can trust the 1790 US census, it reports that the population of New England was overwhelmingly “English” with the English-born population combined with those of direct English lineage to be 95% in Massachusetts, 96% in Rhode Island, 96.2% in Connecticut, 95.4% in Vermont, 94.1% in New Hampshire and, finally, 93.1% in Maine.

The Rhode Island figure given here, however, clashes with the percentage of Africans indicated in a 1755 census, which was put at 10% (cf. below). This implies that either the data was erroneous or that, forty-five years later, the African population had dropped significantly, possibly as a result of the slave trade. Yet, this 1790 census does include the numbers of Africans and Native Americans so the possibility of the Rhode Island data being based solely on people of European descent appears to be incorrect (see below). At this point, I have not been able to explain this discrepancy.

Even if one accounts for inaccuracies in the census, the relative homogeneity of the New England settlements appears apparent and can be explained as follows. First, the earliest New England colonies were mainly coastal settlements starting in what is today Massachusetts. From there, migrations extended into Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Hampshire and Maine. The major settlement period of the region, known as the “Great Migration,” lasted roughly eighty years, between 1620 and 1700 (Anderson, 1992). By 1790, the population of New England numbered around 900,000 people but, very importantly, these were nearly all the descendants of the earliest settlers (Smith, 1972). The high percentage of settlers of English ancestry in the New England colonies can be explained by an extremely high birth rate and low death rate owing to a more favourable climatic and living conditions in the North (ibid.). In contrast, during the first decades of the Virginia settlement, 50% of English children died before reaching the age of ten. The significance is that, of all the colonial regions, the New Englanders’ koine was most likely to have been the most stable and remained free of linguistic influences from outside eastern, southern and Midland England. Recall Lord Adam Gordon’s impression regarding the city of

Boston and the surrounding area in 1764:

The propriety of Language here surprized me much, the English tongue being spoken by all ranks, in a degree of purity and perfection, surpassing any, but the polite part of London... Boston, moreover, is more like an English Old Town than any in America.
(quoted in Read, 1933)

I can only imagine that, as a Scottish lord, the New England inhabitants with whom he spoke must have done their best to accommodate their speech to his own disparitary register. This may have contributed to his impression.

But what of the Native American and African populations? A look at the first 1790 US census (1790, 5) refers to earlier censuses showing, for instance, that the combined populations of Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont was 145,000 in 1735, while the number of Africans stood at 2,600 (1.8%). The census also states that, in 1761, the Native American population of Connecticut stood at 930 of a total population of 146,520 (0.6%). Most of these lived on the periphery of the English settlements. I suspect that the numbers of individuals with mixed heritage were purposely misrepresented or ignored by the census-takers. Only since the 1960s have large numbers of Americans begun to acknowledge, and take pride in, having some Native American ancestry.

By 1755, the number of Africans had risen to 4,000-5,000 out of a total population of 200,000 (2.5%), still a small minority. Even more important, Africans usually lived on small farms and did not number more than a few per holding. This was the rule during the entire period of slavery in America (cf. 1860 US census), where we see that only a minority lived on large plantations of the kind imagined Hollywood films. For this reason, there can be little doubt that, during this earliest period of settlement, most Africans spoke a variety of English that was very likely quasi-identical to that of their English neighbours. As was mentioned above, Rhode Island, on account of its role in the slave trade, had a larger population of Africans and Native Americans which purportedly composed nearly 10% of the population by 1755 out of a total population of 40,636 (1790 census, 5). Once again, these unfree populations may have been transient and en route to other destinations of commerce in the South or in the Caribbean.

In all cases, these numbers are low and the possibility that African or Amerindian languages could have influenced the development of the English koine spoken by the overwhelming English majority, especially at this time of extreme racial prejudice, is unlikely from a sociolinguistic perspective.¹⁰

10 This does not mean that individual frontiersmen, traders, trappers, ministers, etc. did not have extensive dealings with Native Americans and learned their languages. The kinds of pidgins spoken by the latter appear to have been widespread among them (cf. Dillard, 1992, Chapter 1). However, in terms of sheer numbers, the Englishmen who made the effort to learn Amerindian languages was rare. Franklin's grandfather, Rev. Peter Folger, who ministered to

2.2 The Middle Colonies

Montgomery (1996) pointed out that the percentage of inhabitants of English descent in Middle colonies was far lower here than either the South or the North. The 1790 census estimates that the English population of the New York colony was 78.2% overall, but only 59% in Pennsylvania, the lowest for all of states at this time. This was largely on account of the arrival of the “Scots-Irish” after 1715. Nevertheless, as Bailyn (1986a, 1986b) and Fischer (1989) both indicate that the Quakers were a dominant population group for the first few decades of settlement and, when Franklin arrived in Philadelphia in 1723, the Quakers dominated both the Pennsylvania Assembly and House. We have stated several times that Fischer (1989) showed that 80% of these Quakers were from the Northwest Midlands, mainly Cheshire, Derbyshire and Lancashire, with a minority from Yorkshire. The question is to know to what extent a Northwest Midland variety of English may have contributed to the foundation of a regional Delaware and Pennsylvania koine and, more especially, to which degree later settlers (primarily Scots-Irish and German) and their children assimilated it. Indications are that certain features do indeed reflect characteristics of Northwest Midland varieties. One example of this is the Pennsylvania [æ:] versus New England [a:] in words such as “half,” “laugh,” “pass” etc. (cf. Chapter 19).

When Franklin arrived in Philadelphia at the age of seventeen in 1723, the majority population of Philadelphia was Quaker. It was they who founded the town and gave it its name, *philos* (beloved) and *adelphós* (brother), “brotherly love.” One can thus assume he heard an assortment of varieties and registers of accents, grammar and vocabulary from this region of England, which must have sounded quite different from his own Boston idiom.

This is suggested by the fact that, although Franklin rarely ever quotes examples of vernacular English in his writings, he does so on a number of occasions when citing conversations with Quakers. The fact that he worked with them in the Pennsylvania Assembly for well over twenty years, he was certainly intimately familiar with manner of speech. Furthermore, for him to quote them suggests that their speech struck him as particularly different from his own Boston English. What obviously struck him initially was their custom of “theeing and thouing,” that is, the systematic use of the second person singular rather than the second person plural “you” form, which was the standard by Franklin’s time (Franklin, August 16, 1782b), and his proposed translation of the King James Bible (cf. Chapter 4). However, theeing and thouing was considered

the Wampanoag, was among this small minority.

rural and peasant-like and, for that reason, it was associated with the paritary and affective dimension of language. It was still common in wide areas of England until a few years ago. “You” was reserved for more formal disparitary social contexts and this explains why 18th-century prescriptivists rejected the singular form. The Quakers’ practice, of course, was guided by their religious principles since its use implied both humility, equality (hence the “paritary” register) and affective proximity to their interlocutors. It was also an attempt to avoid “proud” disparitary speech.¹¹

From a historical perspective, the pronominal subject “you” stems from an Old and Middle English accusative/dative, not the nominative “ye,” i.e. the diachronically “correct” form. The use of “ye” has been retained in the ecclesiastical English standard to this day. One last point: “thou” is still used by older Christians to express closeness and personal relationship with God, particularly while praying (cf. Elder Pruitt’s sermon, 1978, Chapter 10).

All this to say that the first evening of his arrival in Philadelphia, Franklin was a bewildered and lost young man with no place to spend the night. At one point he says in his *Autobiography* that he came upon a young Quaker man “whose countenance I like’d” and asked where he might find lodgings. The man pointed to a sign in front of a building indicating the “Three Mariners” and added “Here is one place that entertains strangers, but it is not a reputable house; *if thee wilt walk with me, I’ll show thee a better*” (BF, p. 27).

On another occasion following his arrival in Philadelphia, he took a trip to visit his brother John Franklin in Newport, Rhode Island. While on his journey, he was approached by two young women who were particularly friendly with him. At that point “a grave, sensible, matron-like Quaker woman” who had been observing them, approached Franklin and said,

Young man, I am concern’d *for thee*, as *thou* has no friend *with thee*, and *seems* not to know much of the world, or of the snares youth is expos’d to; depend upon it, those are very bad women; I can see it in all their actions; and *if thee art not upon thy guard*, they will draw *thee* into some danger; they are strangers to *thee*, and I advise *thee*, in a friendly concern for *thy welfare*, to have no acquaintance with them. (BF, p. 33)

Until recently, the use of the second person was a common characteristic of English vernacular speech. Furthermore, an additional detail of interest here is the use of the reduced morphological forms “thou has” and “thou seems,” rather than thou *hast* and thou *seem(e)st*. These still can be heard in modern Lancashire (Deane, Bolton; personal notes, German).

11 In passing, some American Quakers still use the second person singular pronouns.

Krapp argued that, in large part, origins of GA English are to be found in the Midland dialects of Pennsylvania. It was also his opinion that this American Midland variety was primarily influenced by the English spoken by what he called the “North Britons” (Krapp, 1925, 29-30). It would not be unreasonable to suppose that he may have confused “northern English” with what are, in reality, the varieties of the Northwest Midlands. After all, even today, Lancashire, Derbyshire and Cheshire people still describe their English as “northern.” A good number of Graham Shorrocks’ Lancashire examples are discussed in Part III and show many striking parallels with Appalachian examples, but also older New England English. Are these to be understood as mere coincidences?

Another point that must be considered in this discussion is that the population movements from one colony to another were commonplace and continuous. Franklin himself is an example of this, having left Boston in 1723 at the age of seventeen and, after drifting to New York, he finally ended up in Quaker Philadelphia in search of work.

This also contributed to harmonizing the English varieties spoken throughout the colonies. For instance, Franklin estimated that around 10,000 Pennsylvania families emigrated to North Carolina (cited by Bailyn, 1986a, 15). Among these were his former Welsh friend and partner, Hugh Meredith and his family, as well as one of the printers he had trained. Presumably some of these were among the first to enter the Smoky Mountains of nearby Tennessee. Note too, that in 1776, there were already 30,000 people living in the Shenandoah Valley (a third of whom were German speakers), and many of these also moved westward into Appalachia and intermarried with the so-called “Scotch-Irish”¹² (cf. Hall, 1942; cf. Chapter 15). There can be little doubt that these Pennsylvanian settlers contributed to the development of the variety spoken in that region and Hall (*ibid.*) seems to support this idea.

Much has been made of the Scots-Irish contribution to American English and, in particular, to Appalachian English. Many scholars, including Michael Montgomery (1991, 2000, 2003, 2008; Montgomery & Kirk, 1996), have supported this claim. Nevertheless, the 18th-century British term used for these Ulster Protestant settlers was the “North Britons.” This explains Krapp’s use of the term. The Scots-Irish were in fact a motley group, including not only large numbers of Ulster Irish Protestants but also Lowland Scots and, importantly, northern Englishmen living to the south of the border with

12 Many people in Appalachia describe themselves as “Scotch-Irish” today. This is a much older term that refers to the Scottish settlers in Ulster. Given that “Scotch” is a term that is disliked by most contemporary Scottish people, I have referred to the Ulster Irish and Scottish protestants as Scots-Irish. Recall that they were once called “northern Britons” in the 18th century.

Scotland.

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the major part of this mass migration from northern Britain occurred during the wars between France and Great Britain over the control of North America (1688-1760/1763). Estimates regarding the numbers involved are enormous for the time, ranging between 155,000-205,000 (Fischer, 1989, 609).

The first of these began to arrive in 1718, after the end of the second of these wars known as Queen Anne's War (1702-1713). As one might expect, the arrivals corresponded to lulls in the fighting. Another three waves landed in Pennsylvania in 1729 and again in 1741, just before the outbreak of King George's War (1744-1748) and yet another in 1755, just at the beginning of the French and Indian War (1754-1760), the most brutal and costly in human lives of the four wars (Fischer, 1989, 606-607).

Finally, and very importantly for my argument, two thirds of these "North Britons" came within a five-year period between 1765 and 1775 (Fischer, 1989, 608), that is, two years after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, after which France ceded Québec and adjacent French-claimed territories in the Ohio territory. The inflow of Scotch-Irish/North British immigrants ended a year before the outbreak of the American Revolution and then ceased altogether.¹³

The point here is that, by 1775, the Pennsylvania and Delaware koines, both paritary and disparitary, had long been established by this time. Moreover, to avoid the risk of French and Native American attacks, many of the first waves of Scots, Ulstermen and northern Englishmen lingered on for years in areas where contacts (and presumably marriages) with inhabitants living in the more established settlements were more frequent. The consequence is that the children of these incomers quickly assimilated the speech habits of their peers on location. In the coming chapters, we shall see that Joseph Hall's account of the settlement of the Smokies echoes this kind of late and gradual movement of populations from Delaware and Pennsylvania down to the Smokies. He also explains that others entered the mountains from Virginia. I strongly suspect that respective koines introduced by these

13 From there, they worked their way southward down the Appalachian mountain chain, a movement which took several decades in large part because of the continuing bloody battles with the Native Americans which, contrary to popular history, the latter generally won! Importantly, this was a century after the process of koineization had begun in the Middle colonies, which suggests that, by the time this wave of Scots-Irish settlers and their descendants had reached places like West Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky, the children of the first generations of settlers had already been largely assimilated linguistically (even if their parents were not!). The German pacifists arrived in the Pennsylvania colony and tended to remain in isolated German-speaking communities, as is still the case today among the Mennonites, Amish and German Baptists today.

Pennsylvanians and Virginians whose English may have been based on a West Midlands koine and a West Country koine respectively, strongly contributed to the development of the regional English of the Appalachians. We have already mentioned the use of a-prefixing in Appalachian English and a host of other uniquely southern English characteristics. From my viewpoint, the Scots-Irish influence appears to be primarily in the domain of vocabulary and idioms and, possibly, a number of grammatical features such as the so-called “nominative absolute,” e.g. “and him a-lookin’ everywhere!”, but even this also has roots in southern England. If so, their influence would thus be primarily adstratal.

With regard to Africans and possibly to Native Americans as well (classified in the figures below under the grouping “slaves”), Franklin published the censuses of eleven counties of New Jersey in his *Poor Richard’s Almanack* (1750), in which he refers to censuses of 1737-1738 and a second one undertaken in 1745. Here we see that the percentage of Africans is significantly higher than in New England.

Fig. 12.1 Census of white people and slaves in New Jersey, 1737-1738. From Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack Improved*, 1750.

Counties	Total of whites	Number of slaves	% of slaves
Middlesex	4261	503	11.8%
Essex	6644	375	5.6%
Bergen	3289	806	24.5%
Somerset	3773	732	19.4%
Monmouth	5431	655	12%
Burlington	4895	343	7%
Gloucester	3145	122	3.9%
Salem	5700	184	3.2%
Cape-May	962	42	4.4%
Hunterdon	5288	219	4.1%
Totals	43388	3981	9.1%

*Note that Morris county is not included in this census

In this first New Jersey census, the African and Native American slave population stood at 9.1% of the total population. A few years later, in 1745, the overall percentage had dropped slightly to 8.1%. The order of counties is as presented in Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack* of 1750.

Fig. 12.2 Census of white people and slaves in New Jersey, 1745. From Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack Improved*, 1750.

Counties	Total of whites	Number of slaves	% of slaves
Morris	4343	93	2.1
Hunterdon	8691	460	5.2%
Burlington	6373	430	6.7%
Gloucester	3304	202	6.1%
Salem	6660	187	2.8%
Cape-May	1136	522	45%
Bergen	2390	616	25.7%
Essex	6543	445	6.8%
Middlesex	6733	879	13%
Monmouth	7728	899	11.6%
Somerset	2896	343	11.8%
<i>Totals</i>	56797	4606	8.1%

The precise nature of this early Pennsylvania koine is admittedly difficult to discern with any degree of confidence, but I now believe, after examination of the data in Part III, that its influence on Franklin's phonology, despite the decades he lived in Philadelphia, is far less apparent than that of his native New England English. This seems to be corroborated to a large degree when one compares his rhyme schemes with those of his fellow New Englanders, which are virtually identical. Nevertheless, possible traces of what might be features of Philadelphia English in his RMS are considered in Chapters 26-27, Part IV. Possible traces of what might be features of Philadelphia English are considered in Chapters 26-27, Part IV. Krapp (1925) also argued that the differences between the Massachusetts and Pennsylvania koines were relatively minor (cf. below), an opinion shared by Grandgent (1899).

As explained in the first part of this chapter, what is significant here is that, compared to the linguistic situation in Great Britain where the basilectal varieties were by far the dominant medium of communication until the early 20th century, the oral, but partially-levelled, paritary koines that developed throughout the colonies during the first one hundred years of settlement contained far fewer heavily marked basilectal features than in England. Furthermore, many speakers were probably capable of code-switching to a higher register of disparitary English when speaking with outsiders. It is probably for this reason that English

travellers were struck by the relative “unity” and “purity” of colonial varieties of early American English.

As hinted above, a striking number of phonological characteristics that are attested in the town registers and in Lowell’s *Biglow Papers* and are still current, especially in Appalachia and in relic areas of the coastal Tidewater regions of Virginia and North Carolina (Outer Banks). Today, a New Englander or a Southerner might balk at such an observation but, nevertheless, it is grounded in linguistic fact. Krapp was one of the first to understand the relative unity of the northern and southern American colonial varieties.

Another general conclusion of some interest abundantly illustrated by the detailed study of American pronunciation is that very many of the pronunciations which now seem peculiarly Southern were formerly general and found in the North as well as the South. Though material for the study of colloquial speech in Virginia and other southern states in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as provided for New England by the local town histories, is unfortunately not abundant, one can safely hazard the guess that the speech of Virginia and the speech of New England at the period of colonization were essentially the same. Why should they not be? The colonists were contemporaries, they came from the same regions of England, in the main from London and Midland and Southern regions, and they represented the same social classes, a sprinkling of gentry in a large body of artisans, farmers and laborers. The differences which now characterize the two speeches probably entered in most instances after the time of colonization and were not important as established general habits in the first years of the several colonies. (Krapp, 1925, 34)

Although Krapp’s outline of the social origins of the settler populations in the various colonies is overly simplified (see below), his basic conclusion is largely accurate and will be reinforced by the data obtained in Part III.

2.3 The Southern Colonies

Founded in 1607, the cradle of the southern colonies was Virginia which, by the end of the 17th century, counted as many as 80,000 English inhabitants. As Fischer has shown (1989, 227-228), 75% of these settlers were wretchedly poor, illiterate, relatively unskilled indentured servants. Only 30% of the total were artisans, as opposed to 60% in New England. The English founder generation of Virginia was overwhelmingly from the West Country and Southwest of England. More specifically, they were drawn from Sussex, Surrey in the Southeast and from Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, Somerset, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, that is, a region corresponding to King

Alfred's Wessex (Fischer, 1989, 259). These settlers would have been quite comfortable hearing the extract from Leith's Somerset novel cited at the end of Chapter 10.

Chesapeake Servants:
Primary Recruiting Grounds (after James Horn)

Origins of Virginia's Elite Families



Fig. 12.3 The geographic and social origins of Virginia's settlers. Adapted from Fischer (1989), by Tanguy Sollicec.¹⁴

¹⁴ My sincere thanks to Dr. Tanguy Sollicec for having prepared these maps for me.

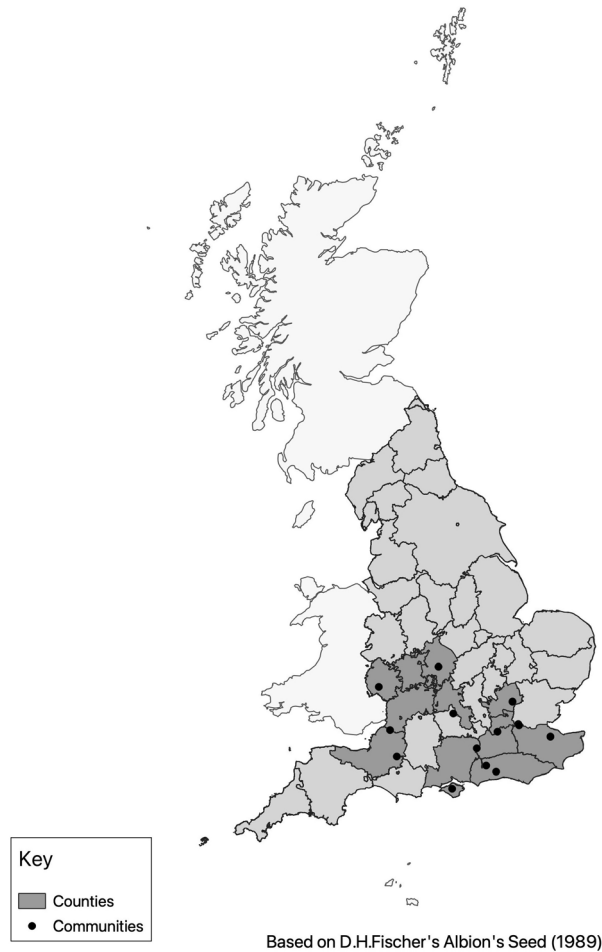


Fig. 12.4 The origin of Virginia's parish names. Adapted from Fischer (1989), by Tanguy Sollicec.

From the very beginning, the Virginia and Massachusetts colonies were diametrically opposed culturally, religiously and politically with the Virginia leadership, who were fiercely pro-Royalist and Anglican. Puritans and other dissenters were *personae non grata* there. Fischer (1989: 214) writes that, from the time of Sir William Berkeley's governorship (1641-1652 & 1660-1677), "Nearly all of Virginia's ruling families were founded by younger sons of eminent English families." Berkeley was a favourite of King Charles I. Furthermore, many of the colonies' leaders who arrived in the 1650s after the beheading of Charles I were former Cavaliers who had fought the Puritan Roundheads during the English Civil War. They remained intensely loyal to King Charles I (and later to Charles II). There was no love lost between them and the Massachusettsans during this

early period. In recognition for their loyalty, Charles I would have referred to Virginia as his “Old Dominion,” an epithet the state still bears to this day. Fischer (1989, 240) adds that of the 152 Virginians who held top offices in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, 16 were related to aristocratic families while 101 were the sons of baronets, knights and rural gentry of England.

As such, it is not surprising that these elites attempted to recreate an agriculturally-based, manorial-type society of the kind they had left behind in England. In the West Country and Southwest, society was founded on the labour of the local peasantry. In Virginia, agriculture was the domain of poor English indentured servants from these same regions. By 1680, the latter were being steadily replaced by African slaves. It has been said that the early Virginian society was only one step away from feudalism. Bailyn (1986a, 346) describes the plight of these indentured servants who were sold by notorious “soul drivers” as “brute beasts” in markets and public fairs across Virginia and Maryland.

The 1790 census indicates that the heritage of the population in the southern states was also mainly English at this time, a demographic situation which was soon to change: Maryland: 84%, Virginia: 85%, North Carolina: 83.1%, South Carolina: 82.4% (ibid).

It is estimated that, overall, the African American population in 1790 was nearly 700,000, 17.5% of the total population white population. In areas of the Tidewater and Piedmont regions of Virginia and the southern colonies more generally, black people came to outnumber their white neighbours. By the time of the Civil War, the African population numbered just over four million, with an additional 400,000 who were “free.”

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, Dillard accepts the idea that, by the mid-18th century, American English had developed into a full koine. Yet, by definition, koineization entails “dialect mixture” and, for this reason alone, it is hardly surprising that early American English should be linguistically “mixed.” In turn, this explains why no existing North American variety can be directly tied to the dialect of any specific county of England. On this point I agree. However, my position differs in several important ways:

- The koines that developed in the North American colonies can be presented along a bipolar continuum with highly disparitary idioms at one end and informal, non-standard paritary ones at the other.
- Disparitary registers can be further subdivided according to the social institutions into they belong, the two fundamental ecclesiastical and secular types. In many respects, the latter were historically,

grammatically and lexically influenced by the former.

- It can be argued that the disparitary American registers are those which maintained the closest linguistic proximity to their counterparts in southeastern England. It is this that amazed English visitors to North America.
- There is clear phonological continuity between the English and American standards (cf. Part IV) but also, in many respects, non-standard dialects from the 17th century to the present (Part III). Certain characteristics have been lost in England, for example, the tenseness of lax vowels such as [i ~ i·] rather than [ɪ], [u ~ u·] as opposed to [ʊ]... (cf. Part III).
- For the most part, the origins of modern east-coast North American non-standard dialects are to be found in the partially-levelled registers that arose in North America during the 17th and 18th centuries.
- Simply because they were non-standard, they were never committed to writing and were thus passed down orally. Hundreds of examples such as *housen* vs *houses* and *sich/sech* vs *such*, cited in Chapter 11 and section 1.2 above, show that oral forms of this kind often survived well into the 20th century, but not in written language, hence, far longer than has been generally imagined (Ihalainen, 1994, 205).
- I have argued that “dialect mixture” is the consequence of a long process of “koineization.” The term “dialect mixture” cannot be equated with “koineization.” In the specific context under study, the initial input varieties, contributed by the respective 17th-century founder generations, were all English in origin. This is also true of Appalachia where the situation was somewhat more complicated and diffuse.
- More specifically, the Massachusetts koine was, from a phonological, grammatical and lexical perspective, particularly beholden to the southeastern (hence its r-lessness) and East Midland varieties of England, in that order, with a later contributions from the Southwest during the second phase of settlement.
- The situation in the Middle colonies is far more confusing and uncertain, with early input from Quakers, principally from the west and Northwest Midlands, which served as the “founder generation.” We have seen that the feature pool in the southern American midlands was later enriched by southern English influences from Virginia and North Carolina.
- The settlement of the southern Appalachians expanded exponentially after the French and Indian Wars with settlers coming largely from

the Delaware Valley and Pennsylvania. Two thirds of the settlers from Ulster, Lowland Scotland, and the far northern counties of England who arrived in Pennsylvania filtered westward into Appalachia well *after* the peace treaty with France in 1763. On account of the continuing wars against the Native Americans for control of this region, these “northern Britons,” as they were then called, lingered on in safer, well-established and linguistically mixed settlements for several decades.

- Large-scale settlement of the southern Appalachians did not begin until the 1780s and 1790s. By this time the second generation of Scots and Ulster Irish and “Northern Britons,” as they were called, had assimilated the local idioms around them.
- While Montgomery (1991, 2000, 2003, 2008; Montgomery & Kirk, 1996) has convincingly demonstrated lexical and grammatical contributions from Lallans (i.e. Lowlands) and Ulster Scots on Appalachian English, as mentioned above, I would describe many of these contributions as “adstratal.” On the other hand, the bulk of the phonological, morphological and grammatical features are characteristic of the southern and Midland varieties of English, perhaps with a slight North Midland flair resulting from the early northern founder generation influence.
- A salient characteristic of modern Appalachian English (and early Massachusetts English) is a-prefixing which has its source in the South and Midlands of England and is foreign to the northern English, Scottish or Ulster English varieties.
- Likewise, phonologically speaking, Appalachian English reflects the English spoken far south of a line stretching from Preston to Hull. North of this line, the Great Vowel Shift never occurred completely in the basilectal varieties ([ɹi:t] for “right,” [ku:] for “cow,” etc.). Having said that, modified pronunciations such as these were already developing with [a:] being the pronunciation of these examples [ɹa:t], [bɹa:t], precisely in places such as the Northwest Midlands, the place of origin of most Quakers. This [a:] pronunciation in place of GA /aɪ/ is heard in large parts of the American South today. Could this feature have been introduced during this time? (cf. Chapter 16).
- Virginia, the birthplace of the American South, was settled by a large contingent from eastern England during the first phase of settlement. These were followed during the second half of the 17th century by a far heavier wave from the Southwest of England. Most of these were illiterate indentured servants. Over the decades that followed the initial settlement, settlers spread into the adjoining southern colonies.

- The extent to which African speakers may have influenced the development of the English of speakers in the Piedmont areas of Virginia, and the American South more generally, is a passionate subject of debate but, as fascinating as it is, it lies outside the scope of this book.

In Chapter 13, we move into unexplored territory with the examination of the work of the early 16th- and 17th-century English orthoepists, many of whose works Franklin almost certainly consulted during his long stay in London. Although Franklin was a printer and keen observer and lover of the English language, it is evident that he could very well have imagined the principles of his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* on his own. Yet there are too many parallels between his work and theirs to be accidental. Although it is impossible to know the full extent of their influence on his scheme, there can be little doubt that they had a significant impact on his approach and the altruistic motivations for proposing his new orthographic system (cf. comparisons between Franklin and John Hart).

13. Franklin's Sources: 16th-and 17th-Century English Orthoepists

Introduction

To my knowledge, the question of whether Franklin based his RMS on former orthoepists' studies has never been explored. This chapter examines a number of clues I have uncovered, suggesting that Franklin did indeed consult the work of English orthoepists, particularly those of the 16th and 17th centuries. To date, the data from 18th-century sources have brought up very little evidence (cf. Chapter 14), other than the fact that two of his close friends, both dedicated Whigs, Sir William Jones and Joseph Priestley, were language specialists. The latter published several works on English grammar as well as on didactics and the value of acquiring a liberal education. Like Franklin he was also interested in scientific studies on electricity, and radical Protestantism too. His book, entitled *The Rudiments of English Grammar, Adapted to the Use of Schools* (1761, 1772) has been described by Straaijer (2011) as the most important work on English of that period. As we shall see in Chapter 29, Sir William Jones is considered by many to be the father of Indo-European linguistics and, ultimately, comparative linguistics. Subjects of language must certainly have been a topic of discussion between the three men during their bi-monthly meetings at St. Paul's Coffee-house in London. The degree to which they may have influenced Franklin in presenting his RMS is difficult to determine.

Furthermore, although he makes no mention of it, I am confident that Franklin was, at the very least, familiar with Sheridan's work on elocution (Sheridan, 1759, 1761, 1762, 1780) and it may be that the publication of his work and Priestley's grammar inspired him to plan his own orthographic reform and pronouncing Fdictionary (cf. Chapter 25).

Nevertheless, I have not included Priestley in this discussion for two principal reasons. First, I have found no references to linguistic matters in their correspondence and, secondly, Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* presents only a very superficial outline of the English vowels and consonants on pages one through three. Nor have I found any reference in Franklin's writings

to earlier 18th-century orthoepistic works such as Thomas Dyche's *Guide to the English Tongue* (1707).

Looby (1984, 17) makes an interesting connection between Bernard Lamy's *La Rhétorique ou l'Art de Parler* (1699), which he claims Franklin had read in translation under the title of the "Art of Speaking." With reference to a passage written by Franklin in his "Poor Richard's Almanack," 1750, Looby refers to:

the treatises on universal grammar and philosophical language that Franklin had read avidly in his youth. For example, the computation of possible combinations of letters was very likely suggested to Franklin by a similar passage in Bernard Lamy's *The Art of Speaking*, which Franklin read in the office of his brother James's New England Courant. Lamy started with 24 letters, and calculated that with them he could make 576 words of two letters each, 13,825 words of three letters each, and so on up to the "*nombre prodigieux de différents mots que l'on peut faire de la combinaison de vingt-quatre lettres.*" This "*fécondité de la parole,*" according to Lamy "*nous donne sujet d'admirer la sagesse de Dieu qui ayant donné l'usage de la parole aux hommes...*"¹

The implication here is that Franklin had recourse to references such as these in mind when he conceived his alphabet (with twenty-six letters)... Support for Looby's account comes from Franklin's *Almanack*, where he writes:

What an admirable Invention is Writing, by which a Man may communicate his Mind without opening his Mouth, and 1000 Leagues Distance, and even to future Ages, only by the Help of 22 Letters, which may be joined 5852616738497664000 Ways, and will express all Things in a very narrow Compass. 'Tis a Pity this excellent Art has not preserved the Name and Memory of its Inventor. (cited in Looby, 1984, 17; cf. Franklin, 1750)²

- 1 ..."the prodigious number of different words that can be formed by combining only twenty-four letters in different sequences.... This rich productivity of language can only inspire our admiration for the wisdom of God who, by granting mankind the use of language..." (author's translation). Although Looby does not mention this, Lamy's remark is of the utmost linguistic significance in that it highlights the mechanics of human language and prefigures André Martinet's revolutionary concept known as the "double articulation du langage." Lamy's remarks concern the "second articulation of language," that is, the idea that a relatively small number of sounds (phonemes) can be combined and recombined in a multitude of different ways to create words. The "first articulation" involves the formation and combination of morphemes (themselves combinations of phonemes!) to create meaning. All human languages share this simple principle (Martinet, 1949, 30-37)! In many respects, linguists and thinkers of the past, such as Lamy and Franklin, have often understood concepts that were theorized centuries later.
- 2 In passing, I should point out that Franklin refers to the "*Art of Thinking*, by Messrs. du Port Royal." This was first published in French by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole (and not by Bernard Lamy) under the title of *La Logique; ou, L'Art de Penser* in 1662. Bernard Lamy wrote the sequel to this under the title of *L'art de parler*, which was translated in 1676 under the title of *The Art of speaking, written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal; in pursuance of a former treatise, entitled, The Art of thinking; rendered into English*. By Bernard Lamy (1640-1715). Subsequent editions were published in 1696 & 1708. It is possible, if not likely, that Franklin read this entire volume but, the fact that Franklin cites only the *Art of Thinking* casts some doubt on the extent of his knowledge of Lamy's work. Nevertheless, recall that Franklin's

The first indication I discovered that Franklin may have had recourse to the work of earlier English orthoepists appears in his RMS in the form of a footnote referring to a certain Sir Thomas Smith (cf. below) written by Benjamin Vaughan, the editor of the *Political, Miscellaneous and Philosophical Pieces written by Benjamin Franklin* (1779). The second hint is found in another footnote, this time in Noah Webster's *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789), a book that Webster dedicated to Franklin himself. The significance of this will be explained below and discussed in greater depth in Part V (cf. Chapters 29 and 30, Volume II, on Franklin's linguistic legacy).

This premise can be surmised from the reasons given by the orthoepists for undertaking their own orthographic reforms as well as their scientific approaches, which are often similar to the methods Franklin employs in his own spelling reform proposal. Nevertheless, my working hypothesis is that he had almost certainly been thinking about the potential value of modernizing the English spelling system since the time he began typesetting as a young boy. It is during his apprenticeship that he realized how wasteful "silent letters" and "digraphs" are in terms of type-space and thus the waste of paper, ink and time. In short, given what we know about his thought processes, he could not have failed to see how illogical and outdated English orthography was, even in his early youth.

In the following discussion, I present the profiles of some of the key orthoepists whose works Franklin is likely to have consulted or those works of which he was aware. In each case I considered the ways these grammarians may have influenced him by highlighting the technical features, approaches and arguments they all share. I should make it clear from the start that the primary aim of "orthoepy" was prescriptive in nature, that is, their goal was to define and promote models of pronunciations which they considered appropriate in "polite society." This term appears to be a translation of an expression in vogue among the social elites in 17th-century France, particularly to designate those who were permitted to frequent the court of Louis XIV, "*le monde poli*," "*le beau monde*," "*les gens du monde*," "*le grand monde*" (de Garidel, 2001, 478-479). It goes without saying that the phonological and grammatical models necessarily shifted during the period from 1500 to 1800 and, even within the same timeframe there were considerable differences between contemporary English orthoepists (cf. Beal, 1999, appendices 1-10).

Although I have consulted the work of numerous orthoepists presented below, I am particularly indebted to Dobson's monumental two-volume work on Early Modern English phonology, *English Pronunciation: 1500-1700* (cf. Chapter 15). What follows is largely inspired from his first volume, in which he presents

Autobiography was written when he was an old man. We have already seen that his ageing memory confused the reference he made regarding Socrates in Greenwood's *Essay towards a Practical English Grammar Describing the Nature and Genius of the English Tongue*, 1722.

detailed summaries of the lives and contributions of each of the major (and minor) English orthoepists.

1. 16th- and 17th-Century Orthoepists

1.1 John Cheke

John Cheke was born on the Isle of Wight on June 16, 1514 and was an intimate friend and associate of Sir Thomas Smith (cf. below). Both men worked together on defining the pronunciation of the most prestigious classical Latin and Greek authors which, they felt, should serve as a model for educated students of these languages. In the process, their research led them to re-examine the many flaws of English orthography and to propose solutions to adapt English orthography to the current pronunciation of their day. Although Franklin probably did not consult his work directly, I have mentioned Cheke here on account of his collaborative work with Sir Thomas Smith whose work Franklin clearly did know. Cheke died on September 13, 1557.

1.2 Sir Thomas Smith

Sir Thomas Smith was born in Saffron Walden, Essex, on December 23, 1513 and died twenty years after Cheke on August 12, 1577. His father was also an Essex man but his mother was from Lancashire. This probably explains his tolerance and interest in northern English pronunciation. Dobson presents Sir Thomas Smith and John Cheke as the first major spelling reformers of the Early Modern period. The great value of Smith's work lies not only in his descriptions of English pronunciation but in the phonetic transcriptions he gives of over 800 words, twice the number I have compiled from Franklin's RMS (cf. Chapter 25 and the RMS Glossary, 442 words, Appendix 3).

As a renowned scholar and specialist of ancient Greek and classical Latin pronunciation, Smith believed that every great culture has its golden age and the pronunciation of the most learned men should serve as a model for the rest of the people of his/her nation. This included England. In Smith's view, for instance, Latin pronunciation was best represented by Cicero.

There is no doubt in my mind that Franklin was aware of the value and contributions to orthoepy of Smith's *De recta et emendata linguae angliae scriptione* ("On Rectified and Amended Written English") which was published in 1568. Aside from inspiring Franklin to undertake his own reform, the latter's influence on Franklin may be better understood through his (and Webster's) belief that England's "golden age" had passed and that its language, writers and orators were

in decline. This sentiment was expressed most directly and energetically by Noah Webster in his *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789) and in his subsequent dictionaries (1806, 1809, 1828, 1841). Both men believed that England's greatest authors had lived between the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I (precisely during Smith's lifetime) and George I, whose reign ended in 1727. As we shall see, there is a blatant political dimension to this argument (cf. Chapters 29 and 30).

As Queen Elizabeth I's ambassador to France and, later, England's Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Smith was sensitive to England's rapidly emerging role as a world power and he considered that English orthography should be in line with the pronunciation of the best educated English speakers of his day and that, for this reason, he was convinced it should be more precisely defined and refined. Given his high social status, and as a native of Essex, one of the regions that would, one hundred years later, contribute a large number of colonists to the Massachusetts colony, he must have considered his own pronunciation to be sufficiently prestigious for others to imitate.

Aware of the great changes in English pronunciation since William Caxton's time, Smith was acutely aware that the English spelling system of his day was already illogical and cumbersome. He therefore believed a reform was absolutely necessary to assist those who needed a guide to achieve a more unified, elegant, prestigious pronunciation. With this objective in mind, he wrote his *De recta* and this founding work became the model for a long line of like-minded scholars who produced similar books and essays during the following centuries. All of them paid homage to this seminal work and, as we shall see, Franklin probably did too.

Smith was also the first to argue in favour of a more phonetic spelling and, like Franklin after him, believed that digraphs such as <th>, <sh>, <ch>, etc. should be replaced by a single character (cf. Dobson's account, 1968, 50-62). He also rejected silent letters, another of Franklin's obsessions. Like Franklin, he used a circumflex accent over the vowel to indicate length. However, unlike Franklin, who designed his own h-like character for voiced and unvoiced (inter) dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, Smith wisely preferred reviving the Old English "eth" character, <ð>, (which was subsequently retained for use by the IPA) and the Old English "thorn" <þ>, eth's voiceless counterpart, to represent /θ/. Smith's symbol for <sh> resembles IPA /ʃ/ (cf. Chapters 25 and 27 for details).

Two other examples of his system are <c> to replace the palate-alveolar affricate [tʃ], <ʒ> for [dʒ] and <h> in place of <gh> to represent the voiceless velar fricative /x/ (and its allophones [x ~ ç ~ h]). Smith's orthographic system consisted of thirty-four characters; or twenty-nine if one does not consider the short vowels (cf. Dobson, 1968, 53).

Fig. 13.1 Sir Thomas Smith's English alphabet, *De recta et emendata linguae Anglicae scriptione, dialogus* (Lutetiae: Roberti Stephani, 1568). Alphabet table illustration (reproduced), followed by minimal pairs and characters. Facsimile reprint in *English Linguistics, 1500-1800*, no. 109 (Menston: Scolar Press, 1968), public domain.

ALPHABETVM ANGLICVM.										
A a	a breuis	man	vir	galerus	corrumpere	L l l	cl	serò	ductus	imple
			bat	mar				lāt	led	fil
A ä a-	a longa	mān	odiſſe	equa		M m m	em	ſtorea	lac	obſcurum
	apis	lētus	hāt	ma-r				mat	milk	dim
B b b	be	bed	iubere	latus		N n n	en	non	collum	ſpelunca
		bid	fid					nay	nek	den
C c c	ce	ceraſum	vultus	ſcindere		O o o	o breuis	ſalire	equus	offa
		ceri	cēr	cop				hop	hors	ſop
D d d	de	columba	charus	malus		O ò ö o-	o longa	ſpes	raucus	ſapo
		dou	dēr	bad				hōp	hōrs	ſop
Δ δ Δ Δε		tu	ibi	balneare				olla	emaciare	ſinus
		Δou	Δēr	bað		P p p	pe	pot	pīn	lap
E e	e breuis	led	natus	infernus				liberatus	penna	cotoneū malū
		plūbum	panis	fanare		Q q q	quu	quit	quil	quins
E ē ē e-	e longa	léd	bréd	he-l				ſorex	aries	vectis
		genus	nafci	calcaneum		R r r	er	rat	ram	bar
F ë	ë Anglica	led	bréd	hel				locationis charta,	pediculi	aleæ
			lima	tibia Alemānica, certamen		S ſ s	es	lēs	lis	dis
F f f	ef	fil	fil	ſtriſ				paſcua	mendacia	moritur
		vile	quinque	certare		Z z z	eZed	leZ	liZ	di-z
V v v	ev	vi-l	fi-v	ſtri-v				ternio canū,	pifcis	diſcus, lanx
		elegans	gignere	lignum		S s s	es	leſ	fiſ	diſ
G g	ge	gai	get	log				plūbū albū	ſtuppa	fouea
		graculus	gagates, hoſpitio excipere	los		T t t	te	tin	rōu	pit
S ſ s	ſe	Sai	get	loſ				tenue	degelaſcere	medulla ar-
		habuit	caput	ſuſpirari		T θ þ	þe	θin	pōu	piþ boris
H h h	ha	had	bed	ſih				dama mas	plenus	limus
		occultum	iube	per		V u u	u breuis	buk	ful	mud
I i y	i breuis	hid	bid	bi				liber	ſtultus	ira, vel affeç
		occultare	manere	emere		V p u w	v-u longa, buk	ful	ful	mwd
I i i i-	i longa	hid	bi-d	bi				verus	ruta	ceruleū, nouū
		catus	prahende	dorſum		Y y y	ü Græca	tru	ru	blu nj
K k k	ka	kat	kac	bak				ſecuris	vulpes	ſex
						X x x	ex	ax	fox	fix.

bad ~ bathe /bad/ ~ /ba:ð/	hell ~ heal [hel] ~ [he:l]	gay ~ jay [gæi] ~ [dʒæi]	bid ~ bide [bid] ~ [bi:d]	pit ~ pith [pit] ~ [pi:θ]
malus <i>bad</i> balneare <i>bað</i>	infernus <i>hel</i> fanare <i>he-l</i>	elegans <i>gai</i> graculus <i>Sai</i>	iube <i>bid</i> manere <i>bi-d</i>	fouea <i>pit</i> medulla ar- <i>piþ</i> <i>boris</i>

<c> for <ch> [tʃ]	<ſ> for <sh> [ʃ]	<h> for <gh> [h ~ ç ~ x]
cerafum <i>ceri</i>	cherry [ˈtʃɛ.ri]	fish [fiʃ]
	pifcis <i>fiſ</i>	ſuſpirari <i>ſih</i>
		sigh [si:h ~ si:ç]

Respectively, I interpret these transcriptions as [piθ], [bæð], [gæt], [dʒæt], [bi:d], [diʃ], [tʃɛ.ɪ ~ tʃeri] and [fi:v ~ friiv?]. An interesting detail here is that Smith indicates ME long /i:/ as a pure vowel and not as a diphthong. This poses a problem for diachronic linguists given that ME /i:/ is generally thought to have been pronounced [ɛi] by 1500. Dobson (1968) opts for [əi], but I believe this is far too early (cf. Lass, 1999, 81-83 and chapter 16). Therefore, *bide* and *five* would have been expected to have been pronounced [bɛid] and [fɛiv] by this time. I shall present my interpretation of the path of evolution of ME /i:/ in Chapter 16 as follows: [ɪi ~ ɛi ~ ɛi ~ ɛi ~ æi ~ ai] with [əi] creeping in along the way. Mazarin (2020) suggests that an [ɹi] diphthong was, a 17th-century competitor.

Considering what a refined phonetician Smith was, it is difficult to believe he made a mistake on this point regarding a conservative pronunciation of “bide” and “five.” ME /i:/ [i: ~ ɪi] may have lingered on far longer than is generally supposed, alongside the more evolved variables.³ After all, I have heard this same *Price* diphthong, often pronounced [i:] by older Lancashire dialect speakers during the 1980s and 1990s, and in other northern counties, when preceding orthographic <gh> in words like “light,” “right” and “bright.”

So where is the proof that Franklin consulted Sir Thomas Smith's work and, even if he did, to what extent did he actually exploit his *De Recta*? The first clue that led me to Sir Thomas Smith as a potential source is found in *Political, Miscellaneous and Philosophical Pieces Written by Benjamin Franklin*. It is in chapter 5 of this book, entitled *Papers on Miscellaneous Subjects*, that Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling* was published. In a footnote (Franklin, 1779, 467) added to the introduction by Benjamin Vaughan, Franklin's editor, he gives the following incidental information.

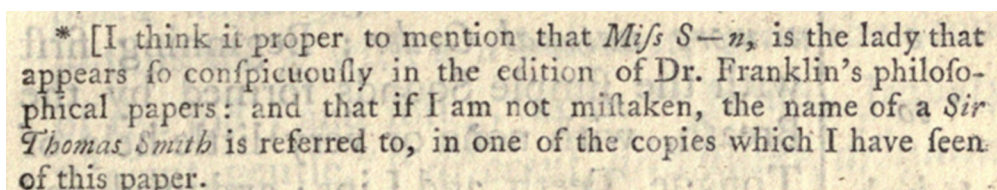


Fig. 13.2 Extract from Franklin's RMS (1779, 467), public domain.

This passage offers several interesting clues. The first is Vaughan's comment “if I am not mistaken” which implies that he no longer had access to Franklin's manuscript(s) at the time he wrote his introduction. Was the copy returned to Franklin? Did his friend and collaborator Polly Stevenson, who lived in

3 The pronunciation of *bihan* “small” is [bɪjã] in normalized Breton but [brin ~ bɛin] in south central Breton (Cornouaille/Kerne); some French phoneticians have recorded this as [bi:n]. [i:] and [ɪi] are easily misinterpreted and, even though the distinction is minimal, it proves the proximity of the two sounds (cf. Chapter 15).

Kensington, lend it to him? I have no answers to these questions.

Secondly, the inclusion of the indefinite article before Sir Thomas Smith's name, "the name of a certain *Sir Thomas Smith*," suggests that Vaughan had no idea who Smith was and that he was citing his name from memory, almost as an afterthought. If so, one wonders whether Franklin's notes contained any additional information regarding Smith's work or that of any other orthoepists. Finally, the phrase "in one of the copies which I have seen of this paper" is revealing in the sense that a) he obviously had several copies of Franklin's papers at his disposal and b), at the time of the printing, he was no longer in possession of them.

This is entirely possible and is in keeping with Franklin's habit of making facsimiles of all of his correspondence and handwritten documents, etc. Although twelve volumes of his writings have survived, he claims in his *Autobiography* that many of these were destroyed during the Revolutionary War. We shall see in Part IV that Vaughan's copies of his reform were virtually identical, with a few differences, to the surviving manuscript version he sent to Polly Stevenson in July 1768 (cf. Appendix 2).

As I progressed in my research on Noah Webster's own orthographic reform and Franklin's influence on his work (see Chapters 29-30), I came across the name of Sir Thomas Smith again, as well as those of other English orthoepists. In his *Dissertations* (1789, 394), Webster writes the following:

Several attempts were formerly made in England to rectify the orthography of the language. But I apprehend their schemes failed of success, rather on account of their intrinsic difficulties, than on account of any necessary impracticability of a reform. *It was proposed, in most of these schemes, not merely to throw out superfluous and silent letters, but to introduce a number of new characters.* Any attempt on such a plan must undoubtedly prove unsuccessful. It is not to be expected that an orthography, perfectly regular and simple, such as would be formed by a "Synod of Grammarians on principles of science," will ever be substituted for that confused mode of spelling which is now established. But it is apprehended that great improvements may be made, and an orthography almost regular, or such as shall obviate most of the present difficulties which occur in learning our language, may be introduced and established with little trouble and opposition.

In a footnote, he identifies some of these orthoepists by name:

The first by Sir Thomas Smith, secretary of state to Queen Elizabeth: Another by Dr. Gill [sic], a celebrated master of St. Paul's school in London: Another by Mr. Charles Butler; who went so far as to print his book in his proposed orthography: Several in the time of Charles the first; and in the present age, Mr. Elphinstone has published a treatise in a very ridiculous orthography.⁴

4 Cf. Elphinstone, 1765.

I initially wondered whether this reference to Smith and the other orthoepists may have resulted from Franklin's discussions with Webster when the latter came to visit him in Philadelphia in the fall of 1786 (cf. Chapters 29-30) or, on the contrary, whether Webster's awareness of them was the result of his own research. In retrospect, and in view of the presence of Smith's name in Franklin's notes, I am inclined to believe it was the former. Webster himself implies he did not have access to libraries where the 16th- and 17th-century orthoepists' studies could have been consulted, increasing the likelihood that his interest in them came after his meetings with Franklin, a time when Webster was in the process of writing his *Dissertations*.

In a very few instances, a quotation has been taken at second hand on the credit of a faithful writer; but never when I could obtain the original work. Many other ancient authors would have been consulted, had it been practicable; but *the most valuable of these are very scarce, and many of them I have not heard of in America. It is to be lamented that old authors are neglected, and modern libraries composed of abridgements, compilations, short essays, &c. which are calculated only for communicating some general information and making superficial scholars, to the prejudice of profound learning and true science.* (my italics) (Webster, 1789, xi)

Nevertheless, even if Franklin initiated Webster to the earlier orthoepists' studies, the fact is that it is Vaughan who informs us of Franklin's reference to Sir Thomas Smith. Franklin makes no mention of any orthoepists in his RMS or their possible contributions to his own work, nor have I found any references to them in his writings.

Webster, on the other hand, knew Latin well and does cite Wallis fourteen times in his *Dissertations* along with entire passages in Latin from his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1653). Webster also states his respect for Bishop John Wilkins, to whom he makes three references. Smith, however, is mentioned only twice, once in the footnote quoted above and again in a list of "writers of eminence" such as Harris, Beatie, Blair and Condillac (1789, 181). It is thus probable that he had little knowledge of Smith or Butler, Gil or any others he mentions, except Elphistone, whom he openly mocks. Here again, could he have been informed of these orthoepists' work by Franklin? If not, how did he gain knowledge of them?

As I mentioned earlier, Webster dedicated his *Dissertations on the English Language* to Franklin and openly acknowledged that Franklin had given him all his personal notes that had served to prepare his 1768 spelling reform. I cannot say whether these were the same notes as those Vaughan had at his disposal (i.e. and that Vaughan had returned to him after publishing his *Political, Miscellaneous and Philosophical Pieces written by Benjamin Franklin?*). It is thus not impossible that this may have prodded Webster to delve more deeply in their work.

Franklin also gave him the six lead characters he had designed and cast at Watts' Printing House to implement his spelling reform (cf. Chapters 8 and 25). After meeting Webster at his home in 1786, Franklin must have imagined that Webster would have adopted his system without modification, and it is for this reason that he gave him his characters and notes. Three years later, when Webster's *Dissertations* was published, he must have been disappointed when Webster openly chose to disregard Franklin's model (one sound for one letter) and proposed another scheme for his own orthographic reform (for more, see Chapters 29 and 30):

It was proposed, in most of these schemes (i.e., including Franklin's), not merely to throw out superfluous and silent letters, *but to introduce a number of new characters. Any attempt on such a plan must undoubtedly prove unsuccessful.* (Ibid., 394).

I have explained previously that Franklin was certainly familiar with Wallis and Wilkins (cf. Chapter 2). If one considers Webster's references to Smith, Charles Butler and Alexander Gil and others, this may be indirect evidence that Franklin's own RMS plan may have been at least partially inspired from the work of all these illustrious orthoepists. As a printer, these practical, scientific approaches to spelling must have made fine sense to him (cf. Hart below). It was lost on Webster, who was certainly not a phonetician, as we shall see in Part V.

Nevertheless, in some respects, Webster's system has more in common with the scheme of transcription Sir William Jones's imagined in his "Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters," and whose treatise was published in 1786, three years before his *Dissertations on the English Language*. Again, it seems inconceivable that Franklin had not informed Webster of William Jones' interests in language, given that the latter was his good friend and a fellow Whig (cf. Chapter 29) and he may well have consulted this book too. As we shall see, Webster mentions Jones and Priestley as figuring among the best writers of his time. Was this simply to please Franklin?

1.2.1 Franklin's Knowledge of Smith's De Recta

I believe that this evidence, albeit indirect, is vital to understanding the sources to which Franklin had access. The question is at what point in his life he imagined his spelling reform project. As I have suggested previously, it is likely that the idea of an orthographic reform had occurred to him independently during his early apprenticeship to his brother James in Boston or, perhaps, in 1723-1724 during his days in London as a young journeyman at Palmer's and Watts' Printing Houses. By 1725, Franklin already possessed all the technical skills, the insight and, equally important, the financial motivation and ambition to undertake such a project. Furthermore, we saw in Chapter 4

that, just as the orthoepists going back to Smith argued in favour of a system based on "one sound for one letter," Franklin conceived his *Art of Virtue* (1726) in the same manner, that is, "one common definition for one virtue," a novel concept at the time.

Nevertheless, I have not found any evidence suggesting that printers' apprentices were expected to familiarize themselves with older orthographic systems and fonts but, given his curiosity, Franklin may have taken it upon himself to do just that during his first stay in England.

In the end, although Franklin clearly had given the matter serious thought, he never applied himself seriously to complete his spelling reform project and one can only assume that it never had been one of his top priorities. When he did finally put his ideas for a reform on paper it was during the summer of 1768 during a lull in his activities and at a time when he was thoroughly discouraged and weary in his attempts to stave off a war between the American colonies and the English homeland (cf. Chapter 8).

The presentation of his system, as published by his editor Benjamin Vaughan in 1779, must thus be viewed as a trial run and a very sketchy one at that. Perhaps convinced by Polly Stevenson's arguments against the reform (cf. Chapter 25), he may simply have abandoned the idea of launching a new orthographic system for the English language, estimating himself to be too old to undertake such an enormous task (he actually mentions his age as a factor for not going further). Moreover, he was already a wealthy and well-respected figure at this point, at least among English Whigs and in his American homeland. When Webster finally visited Franklin in the fall of 1786 and expressed his ambition to carry on the task of a spelling reform, this must have appeared to Franklin as a golden opportunity to launch yet another project to "do good" by encouraging another altruistic project which would accelerate the education of the poverty-stricken underclasses that were then pouring into the new nation (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

At another level, one wonders whether Franklin's knowledge of Sir Thomas Smith's *De Recta* was first or second hand. By his own admission, Franklin informs us in his *Autobiography* (BF, p. 99) that he was unable to read Latin until the age of twenty-seven, but only after he had taught himself French, Italian and Spanish.⁵ This is unlike Webster, who had an excellent knowledge of Latin. Indeed, Franklin advised students of Latin that the best way to learn it was after first having learnt its modern derivatives. This puts us around 1733. It seems probable that Franklin never completely mastered Latin (but this is a mere assumption on my part) and, for this reason, his knowledge of Smith's

5 "When I had attained an acquaintance with the French, Italian, and Spanish, I was surpriz'd to find, on looking over a Latin Testament, that I understood so much more of that language than I had imagined, which encouraged me to apply myself again to the study of it, and I met with more success, as those preceding languages had greatly smooth'd my way" (BF, p. 99).

work may have been somewhat superficial. If so, what he did learn from his *De Recta* might have been acquired through secondary sources, that is, from later orthoepists for whom Smith's book served as a model (see below).

Franklin was not to return to London until 1757, after which time he served as a colonial agent in defence of the colonists' grievances against the Crown. I am not certain that, prior to this time, he would have had direct access to these orthoepists' works in Philadelphia, when books were so scarce.

In 1756, however, Franklin was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in recognition for his ground-breaking scientific experiments on electricity. As it turns out, the orthoepists Wallis and Wilkins were among the founding members of the Royal Society in 1660. The most likely date for the serious consultation of their work was thus during his own visits to the Royal Society library during his long stay in London between 1757-1775. As we shall see below, these two orthoepists, along with John Hart and others, also cite Smith's work in detail. It is thus not impossible that Franklin came to know Smith's arguments and proposals by consulting Hart (1569) or Wilkins (1668), both of whom wrote in English. His studies of Smith and Wallis' work, written in Latin, may have been more cursory.

1.2.2 An English Golden Age?

I have already stated that Franklin and Webster both believed that, after the reign of George I, the golden age of English language and literature had passed and that, by the 1770s and 1780s, both were in a state of decline. Webster firmly believed that this was due to the influence of what he considered to be the foppish members of the English court and stage. Their affected and ever-changing pronunciations, he argued, were being codified by orthoepists such as Sheridan and, later, by Walker. It was their innovative phonological proposals that were corrupting the older, "purer" form of English that he felt had been best preserved in New England (cf. Chapters 29 and 30).

Franklin, on the other hand, focuses only on what he considers to be the abuse of language in America. This decline was especially visible lexically such as the abundant use of neologisms or the use of nouns as verbs, practices that he and other Englishmen branded as "barbarisms." In his third and final letter to Webster in 1789, he makes it clear that the faulty characteristics are to be found in American English but makes no mention of the same deficiencies in the English of England.

Smith's proposal to select the "best authors" of the Latin and Greek golden ages as models for linguistic and phonological norms may well have influenced Franklin and especially Webster to adopt a comparable approach. The latter's obsession and stated ambition of restoring the English language to its former

glory may find its source here. This is significant in that what Webster really meant by a linguistic “declaration of independence” from England had far more to do with maintaining this older English pronunciation model rather than creating a new, innovative “American” model which is how his efforts are generally perceived today.

Viewing Webster's positions according to modern conceptions of American national identity is anachronistic in the sense that it obscures the genuine attachment American colonists had to the language and culture of the motherland. In this, both Franklin and Webster agreed. Furthermore, like most educated Americans at this time, their quarrel was with what they viewed as the political abuses of the London elites (i.e. the Tories), not with England or its common people to which most colonists felt an intimate bond of kinship. Even the Declaration of Independence refers to the British people as “brethren” and stresses “consanguinity.” We have seen that the sentiment was not necessarily reciprocal, however.

It is therefore not unlikely that Franklin studied Smith's treatise, directly or via secondary sources, at some point after 1757 during his first long stay in London. If Franklin had the opportunity to delve more deeply into the subject and had actually presented a more detailed, completed version of his RMS, he almost certainly would have recognized Smith, as all the former orthoepists had done, as the founding father of English orthoepy.

In conclusion to this section, regardless of the precise stemma, the principles proposed by Smith seem to have laid the foundation for Franklin's own RMS.

1. The reasons provided for the need for a reform, i.e. English orthography no longer corresponded to the pronunciation of his day and thus needed to be modernized (cf. also Hart).
2. The organization of the presentation:
 - a. a detailed description of the sounds and characters, as well as proposals for single characters representing each phoneme;
 - b. a detailed analysis of the speech organs and their role in the articulation of English speech sounds.

This same scheme was followed by other 16th- and 17th-century orthoepists, starting with John Hart, and appears to have been established as a requirement for all those who followed.

1.3 John Hart

The next major spelling reformer after Sir Thomas Smith is John Hart. He was a teacher and his well-conceived pedagogical approach and worries about the

state of English orthography are reflected in how he presents his system. Little is known about him, but it appears that he was a Londoner born and bred. It is known that he died in London in 1574. Although he is not mentioned either by Benjamin Vaughan or by Noah Webster, for reasons outlined below, it is possible, if not probable, that Franklin had consulted at least one of Hart's three known works.

His first work was *The Opening of the Unreasonable Writing of our English Tounge* (1551), which he dedicated to King Edward VI. But this survived only in manuscript form and was never printed. It is therefore unlikely that Franklin ever had access to this work. It is more likely that Franklin would have read his second and third works. The first and best-known printed work is *An Orthography*, in which Hart recognizes having benefited from his reading of Sir Thomas Smith's treatise. It was published in 1569 in the form of a pamphlet. His third work was a primer outlining his new orthographic proposals, entitled *A Methode or Comfortable Beginning for All Unlearned* and was published the following year in 1570. This too would have been a work of great interest to Franklin, given that the primary objective of his RMS was to assist the illiterate in learning to read and write English quickly.

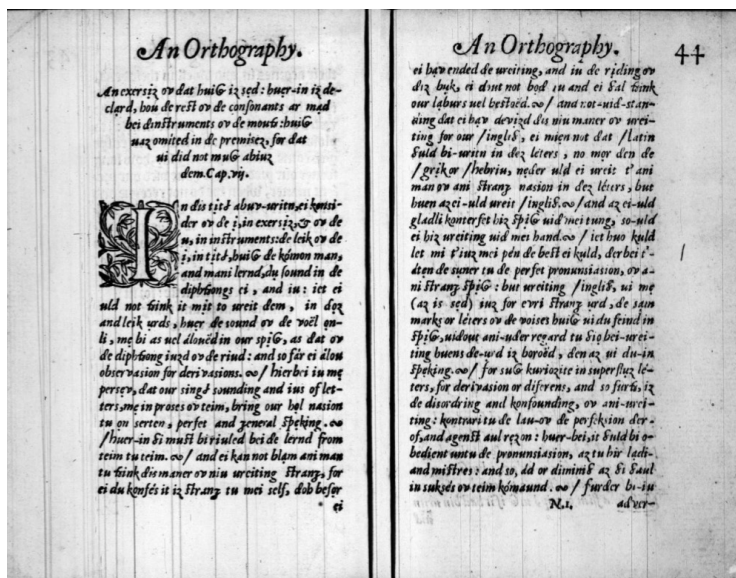


Fig. 13.3 first page of Hart's *An Orthography*,⁶ 1569, public domain, https://archive.org/details/bim_early-english-books-1641-1700_an-orthographie_hart-john_1569/page/n95/mode/2up

According to Dobson (1968, 63), because Hart's work was not widely available to scholars until recent times, it remained relatively obscure and, for that reason, one

6 This title is normally presented with the French spelling of *Orthographie*.

wonders how Franklin might have gained access to it, if he ever did. Nevertheless, in view of the numerous parallels between Hart's and Franklin's arguments and methodologies, I find it hard to believe that the similarities are fortuitous.

Hart's arguments in favour of a reformed spelling system, as well as its didactic nature and objectives, are remarkably similar to those proposed two hundred years later by Franklin:

1. Following Sir Thomas Smith, Hart complains that the present orthographic system being chaotic and lacking order. Hart concludes that his treatise has the same "summe, effect, and ende" as Sir Thomas Smith's (cf. Dobson, 1968, 68 for a complete discussion). He writes "You are forced to graunt the writing should have so many letters as speach hath voices, and no more nor lesse." Hart advances this crucial argument again stressing that the writer should respect the rule of having a single character to represent a single sound:

Use as many letters in our writing, as we doe voyces or breathes in speaking, and no more: and never to abuse one letter for another (my italics), and to write as we speake: which we must needs doe if we will ever have our writing perfite ... and so we may be duely served at our neede: and not be driven to abuse any one, in two or three soundes, as we now doe diverse. (Hart, *An Orthographie*, 1569, 6; cf. Jespersen, 1907, 64)

The first sentence is a nice paraphrase of the mantra "one sound, one letter." Franklin formulates his desire to adopt the same approach in very similar terms (Franklin, 1779, 469), which he expresses as follows:

- "every Letter ought to be confined to one sound"
 - "their Sound" should be "always the same"
 - "no letter should be used that is not sounded."
2. Hart states that a reform would help illiterate English people to learn to read as quickly as they would learn to recognize and reproduce the letters. Foreigners and "the rude country Englishman" (Caxton's "rude vplondisshe men") would be able to pronounce English "as the best sort use to speak it." As a well-educated Londoner, Hart leaves no doubt as to what he considers the most perfect English, which is spoken at the court of England where "the flower of the English tongue is vsed."

Franklin also insists on the difficulty of learning to read and write for ordinary Britons and foreigners and, unlike Webster, at the time he wrote his RMS, he believed that London English should be the model for all Britons.

The difficulty of learning to spell well in the old way is so great, that few attain it; thousands and thousands writing on to old age without ever being

able to acquire it. 'Tis, besides, a difficulty continually increasing; as the sound gradually varies more and more from the spelling: and *to foreigners it makes the learning to pronounce our language, as written in our books, almost impossible.* (my italics) (Franklin, 1779, 474)

This comment is important because it indicates that his reformed orthography, like Franklin's, would also serve as a pronunciation guide for the lower social orders. This was assumed by all those who followed, including Thomas Spence at the end of the 18th century (cf. Beal, 1999; Chapter 14).

3. Surprisingly, Hart is also concerned by the problems of current orthography for printers: "It will save paper, ink and time" he states. This remark would certainly not have been lost on Franklin and, as I have stated previously, I feel certain that, even as a young apprentice and typesetter, he had already thought of this point. Given his awareness of the lack of logic and wastefulness of the current English orthographic system (particularly regarding the superfluous characters), Hart's argument would have provided an additional incentive. This extra bit of information may also imply that Hart was involved in some way in the printing trade.
4. Importantly, the system would allow educated people to pronounce foreign languages easily. At the end of his *Orthography*, Hart proposes a transcription of the *Notre Père* which offers an excellent rendition of 16th-century French pronunciation. In this respect, I find it to be far superior to Sir William Jones's attempt to transcribe a stanza of Malherbe's poetry published in his 1786 *A Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters* (cf. Chapter 29). Having said that, some believe that Jones' dreadful portrayal of French may have been intended to be humorous.

This clearly implies that Hart imagined that his alphabet could be expanded to assist learners of foreign languages to pronounce them correctly and, in this sense, he may well deserve the credit of being considered one of the first forerunners of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Lodwick's "An Universal Alphabet" (1686), however, as the title suggests, made the first real attempt to create a genuine international phonetic alphabet (cf. Wilkins below).

Most of these arguments are articulated in one way or another in the introduction to Franklin's reform or in the form of counterarguments to Polly Stevenson's criticisms of his orthographic reform scheme (cf. Franklin, 1779).

The general consensus of modern linguists is that Hart was perhaps the best phonetician of the 16th century and, in my own opinion, his choice of characters and diacritics is arguably more readable and, to some degree, more refined than

Franklin's, for reasons that will be discussed in Chapters 25-28.

Having said that, in terms of the technical approach both men adopted, Franklin's strategy is very close to both Smith's and Hart's. Like Franklin, Hart proposes the creation of six new characters: like Smith and Franklin, Hart replaces the digraphs <th> (voiced /ð/ and voiceless /θ/), as well as the palato-alveolar <sh> /ʃ/. Like Smith (but unlike Franklin), Hart proposes a single symbol for the affricates <ch> /tʃ/ and <j> /dʒ/. Quite uniquely, Hart, however, also proposes <l> to represent word-final syllabic [l], in final unstressed clusters. Another difference is that Franklin adopts an extra sign resembling the IPA [ŋ], which is inspired by Greek, and he makes no special provision for recording a syllabic /l/.

Fig. 13.4 Hart's six new characters (*An Orthographie*, 1569). Drawn after a facsimile of Hart's work in Denis Freeborn, *From Old English to Standard English*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998. Wikimedia Commons, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category%3AJohn_Hart

Hart's new symbols	IPA equivalents
Ɑ	/θ/
Ɱ	/ð/
Ɐ	/ʃ/
Ɒ	/tʃ/
ⱱ	/dʒ/
Ⱳ	/l/ (syllabic /l/)

Furthermore, Hart had twenty-five characters in his system (of which five were vowels) against twenty-six for Franklin.

Other features of Hart's system are shared with Franklin's scheme, for instance, the indication of vowel length by marking the vowel with a diacritic. In Hart's case, he does so with a dot under the vowel while Franklin prefers a circumflex accent over it (although he only does this to indicate [ɛ: ~ ε:]. More often, however, Franklin reverts to doubling the vowel (ee [ɛ: ~ ε:] and ii [i:]). For good reason, his treatment of GA/RP approximant glides [j] and [w] as vowels is also the same as in Hart's. Both men record them as pure vowels, hence Franklin's spelling of "you" as *iu* or "would" as *uuld* or *uld*. It is thought that the glides did not become common until the 18th century. Note too that these same spellings were also adopted by Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal in his 1480 "Hymn to the Virgin" (German, 2000a, 2001, 2007a).

Fig. 13.5 Hart’s transcription of the Lord’s Prayer, *A Methode or Comfortable Beginning for All Unlearned* (London: Denham, 1570), public domain, https://archive.org/details/bim_early-english-books-1475-1640_a-methode-or-comfortabl_hart-john-chester-hera_1570/page/n27/mode/2up

Hart’s transcription of the lord’s prayer	The IPA rendition
	//vʊr 'fæ:ðɹ huiʃ'ært m 'hɛ:vŋ 'hælu-ɛd bi: ðei 'næ:m // ðei 'kiŋdum 'kum // ðei 'uil bi: 'du:n m 'ɛ.ɪθ / æz ɪt 'ɪz m 'hɛ:vŋ/ 'givuz ðɪz'de: vʊr 'dɛ:li brɛd // ænd fɔr'giv uz vʊr 'trɛspæses æz ui fɔr'giv ðɛm ðæt 'trɛspæs a'ge:nst us // ænd 'lɛ:d uz 'nɒt ɪntu 'tɛm'tæ:sɪɒn but dɛ'livɹ us frɒm 'ivl// //sɒ 'bi: ɪt // *his /r/ may have been [r]

Hart’s transcription of syllabic consonants is interesting, showing that this phenomenon is very old indeed and not necessarily “sloppy English:” [‘fæðɹ], [dɛ’livɹ], [‘hɛ:vŋ], [‘ivl]. Note the transcription of hallowed as [‘hælu,ɛd]. On a few occasions, Franklin provides a similar stressed pronunciation of final <-ed> in some of his poems, one example being “married,” which is realized as [‘mæ.ɪ,ɛd]. Such unstressed syllables are discussed more fully in Chapters 26 and 27.

Hart offers another example showing that, in his day, ME /i:/ was realized as [ɛi ~ ɛi ~ ɛi] and not [əi] as Dobson insists was the case; see, for example, his transcription of “thy” as [ðɛi]. My interpretation of Swrdwal’s “Hymn to the Virgin,” an English-language poem which he composed using Welsh orthography around 1480, also shows that Welshmen interpreted it as [ɛi] (cf. German, 2000, 2001, 2007). We shall see in Part III, that the dominant pronunciation of ME /i:/ in 17th-century Massachusetts was still /ɛi/.

His openness of mind with regard to variant pronunciations is quite striking and Jespersen is quick to point this out, citing Hart (Jespersen, 1907, 22)

Hart’s spelling, on the other hand, is based on no other principle but actual pronunciation, rendered with the utmost fidelity he was capable of, and with express rejection of such considerations as etymology. He even goes so far as to say (p. 62^a): “ðe skotij/ spi-tf/ iz tuil-iu, for our huat uil-iu, huei me de’ not boldlei ureit it so?” (i.e. “The Scottish speech is “t’will you?” for our “what will-you?”, why may they not boldly write it so?”).

We shall see that Franklin also gives spells of traditional orthographic <hw> and <w-> as *hu* and *u* in his RMS. See also the spelling of Hark's <-ly> of "boldly" as [lei] which Franklin also records as *-lyi* on three occasions in his RMS, and quite systematically pronounces [ləi ~ ɹi] as rhyming with words such as *die*, etc. in his poetry (cf. Chapters 16 and 27). This reveals a remarkably old feature of Franklin's everyday speech which was retained in colonial English and certainly more reminiscent of early 17th-century New Englandisms.

One of the remarkable traits of Hart's *Orthography* is that nearly the entire text of his book (100 pages) is composed in his phonetic system, making it one of the most valuable sources for deciphering the pronunciation of London English during the second half of the 16th century. If Franklin did *not* have access to John Hart's book and/or his primer, the parallels between the two men are quite remarkable.

1.4 William Bullokar

William Bullokar was born in Sussex around 1530. Although he was relatively well educated for his time (he knew both French and Latin), his lower social status shows through in the submissive tone he adopts when referring to previous orthographic reformers such as Sir Thomas Smith and John Hart whom he claims were much better educated and knowledgeable. His *Booke at Large, for the Amendement of Orthographie for English Speech*, printed in 1586, was in fact written in 1550 and, prior to publishing it, he actually tested his new orthography on his own children and found it to be an efficient and beneficial system to teach them to read. He writes that he was informed by a friend of the work of a Sir Thomas Smith's book and that of a certain Maister Chester only two years prior to the printing of his *Booke at Large*, which caused him to modify portions of his own work. As it turns out, this Maister Chester is none other than John Hart who signs his *Orthographie* as the "Herald of Chester."

Nevertheless, after having humbly acquiesced that these men were greater scholars than he, Bullokar then proceeds to criticize both Smith and Hart's decision to introduce new characters which he feels made their respective systems unreadable for learners. This is a position which is later shared by other orthoepists and, most notably for our purposes, by Noah Webster and Sir William Jones. Indeed, Webster indirectly condemns Franklin's system in a way very reminiscent of Bullokar (cf. above & Chapters 29 and 30).

Overall, although Bullokar's work is very informative with regard to conservative Sussex pronunciation of his day, a variety that contributed to the Massachusetts koine, it is more complicated and, in the end, far more difficult to interpret and apply than Hart's system. Although Franklin may have been aware of his contributions, Bullokar's reliance on pre-existing characters would not

have appealed to Franklin the printer and, as such, I doubt whether Bullokar's work had any real impact on his own reform proposal.

1.5 Charles Butler

Charles Butler was born around the year 1560 and was a contemporary of Alexander Gil. Butler's name is also directly mentioned by Webster as one of the early spelling reformers and it is not impossible that his knowledge of Butler came through his discussions with Franklin during their meeting in 1786. Born in Buckinghamshire, he was educated at Magdalene College, Oxford, where he earned both a BA in 1584 and an MA in 1587. He spent most of life in Hampshire, where he served as a rector and, later, as a teacher, in various parishes in and around Basingstoke. His *English Grammar* was published in 1633 and, like his predecessors, he criticized the current spelling system of his day, complaining it was terribly outdated: "But wee have in our language many syllables, which having gotten a nue pronunciation, dooe yet retein their olde orthographi..." In this same passage, Butler goes on to state that the "olde pronunciation" has been "forsaken" in the "more civil parts [as the Universities and Citties]; there wee conform our writing to the nue sound, and write as wee speak..." Since the old pronunciations still persisted in rural areas, he suggested that the old pronunciations be spelt accordingly by those who still used them (Dobson, 1968, 157).

This is yet another fascinating piece of precious early evidence that new pronunciations, i.e. based on innovations such as ME /ɛ:/ > /i:/, etc., were associated with cities, while "old" or conservative pronunciations were better preserved in the rural areas, as they are today. The idea of dialect mixing discussed in the previous chapters applied to cities as well!

As we see in the preceding passage, Butler largely sticks to the older spellings and only introduces new characters for [tʃ], [ʃ] and [ʍ] (i.e. [hw]), none of which physically resemble the characters designed by Franklin. By and large, Dobson (1968, 159) brushes aside Butler's system, writing that it did not tell us more than "than the traditional spelling does." Nevertheless, Butler's indication of vowel length by doubling the letter corresponds to Franklin's approach: *wee* [wi: ~ ui:], *dooe* [du:]. Note also that his spelling of "new," *nue*, suggests it was pronounced [nu:], just as Stevenson and Franklin realized it (i.e. *nu*) (cf. Chapters 23 and 27).

1.6 Alexander Gil

Alexander Gil, on the other hand, is widely considered to have been one of the greatest orthoepists of his time. He was born on February 7, 1564, and died in

1635. Like Sir Isaac Newton, who also imagined a pronunciation scheme of his own in 1661 while attending Cambridge, he was a Lincolnshire man and, although he spent much of his life in London and was educated at Oxford, aspects of his regional pronunciation appear in his transcriptions. From his own testimony, however, he rejected his Lincolnshire accent in favour of the London model (Dobson, 1968, 131). Webster also identifies him as “Dr. Gil” and as one of the major spelling reformers.

After graduating from Oxford in 1589, only two years after Charles Butler, he became the High Master of St Paul's School, a fact which is also mentioned by Webster. I suspect that these details probably came from Franklin's notes. John Milton was among Gil's most illustrious pupils. Webster also identifies Milton as one of the best writers of the English golden age of literature and language. Once again, I also suspect that this position is the result of his discussions with Franklin (cf. Chapters 29 and 30 for more detail).

Gil's Latin-language *Logonomia Anglica*, published in 1619 (second edition in 1621) presents one of the most complete linguistic programs for the modernization of English and was intended for cultivated readers as well as foreigners who wanted to learn English. Dobson asserts that it was “not a perfect phonetic representation of English” but adds that his system was:

...thoroughgoing and simple and did not depart too far from the old orthography. It may indeed be thought a great pity that it was not adopted for a reform was at that time still practicable. (Dobson, 1968, 131)

Nevertheless, Gil did propose innovations in his 1619 edition: <c'> for <ch> [tʃ], <g'> for <g> [dʒ], <ð> for <th> [ð] and, quite strikingly, an h-like symbol, almost identical to Franklin's, to represent voiceless <th> [θ] (cf. Chapter 25). Coming from such a great scholar and specialist of English historical phonology, Dobson's positive opinion of Gil's work should be highlighted. Although Gil did revive the use of Old English <ð> for the voiced (inter)dental fricative (following Sir Thomas Smith) and diacritics to indicate [ɹ], [tʃ] and [ʃ], Gil was not comfortable with the idea of introducing new orthographic characters and generally avoided it.

Given that his book was written in Latin, it is unlikely that Franklin took the time to exploit all of it in-depth. On the other hand, to repeat, Webster did know Latin very well and, if he had had access to these 16th-century Latin-language books, would have been able to read them without difficulty.

Gil gives one of the first clear statements about the existence of an expanding standard English pronunciation which, he believes, should be based on the speech of the “learned and cultured” (cf. Dobson, 1968, 142), a belief which was shared by those before and after him, including both Franklin and Webster (cf. Chapter 14). That most of the “learned and cultured” people were based in London is also an important point to consider.

1.7 John Wallis

Webster refers to “several” orthoepists who lived during the time of King Charles I and he was almost certainly referring to John Wallis, John Wilkins and, perhaps, Richard Hodges, all members of the Royal Society. Wallis was the most eminent of these and one of the first of the spelling reformers of the 17th century. As I mentioned above, Webster refers to Wallis fourteen times in his *Dissertations* and frequently quotes Latin passages of his work.

Wallis was born into a wealthy family in Ashford, Kent, on November 23, 1616 and, for good reason is widely considered to have had one of the most brilliant minds of his era. By the time he was fourteen, he had studied Greek, Latin and some Hebrew. Following that, he went to Cambridge where he pursued his interests in languages, logic, mathematics, physics, anatomy, medicine, astronomy and geography. All of this was part of his personal goal to gain a firmer grasp of scripture and to prepare himself for more in-depth theological research. Wallis, like John Wilkins, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Spence, was a Presbyterian, one of the dissenting denominations which, as we saw in Part I of this book, was viewed with great suspicion and antagonism by the Anglican hierarchy during the 17th and 18th centuries. After Charles II’s ascension to the throne of England in 1660, Wallis was forced to resign from his post at Cambridge on account of his religious views (as was Wilkins, see below). For the same reasons, John Allin Jr., rector of Rye in Sussex, was relieved of his post (Chapter 11). It was also during the reign of Charles II that Franklin’s own father and uncle immigrated to Boston to escape the religious oppression from which they also suffered. Finally, recall that Peter Folger, Franklin’s maternal grandfather, wrote a poem condemning Charles II’s persecution of Dissenters. Folger firmly believed that the Wars against the Wampanoag tribe of Massachusetts was God’s punishment for Charles II’s “heinous” laws against their Protestant denomination (Chapter 2).

As a devout Presbyterian, John Wallis’ primary objective in writing his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1653) in Latin was to assist foreigners in learning English so they could have access to the numerous Protestant theological publications that were printed throughout that century. Simultaneously, it would allow them to study the important publications on science and other important subjects which British thinkers and scholars were producing in great quantities by the middle of the 17th century. This explains why he wrote his treatise in Latin, the *lingua franca* of the educated during this time. Nevertheless, he also adds that he was writing for Englishmen who believed at the time that the English language *had no real grammar* or, as Dobson (1968, 223) phrases it, “that

English is incapable of reduction to the rules of grammar.”⁷ In this way, he hoped his book would benefit both foreigners and Englishmen alike in their study of the nascent English standard.

Like Smith and Hart, Wallis also defends a one-letter-one-sound approach to spelling. He also goes to considerable lengths to describe the organs of speech and the sounds they produce, as well as a technical terminology to identify them. This is perhaps one of the ways Wallis (via Smith) exercises an influence on Franklin because, like many of the orthoepists who followed Wallis, he makes a profound effort to place the discussion of English pronunciation on a scientific footing, which we would describe today as acoustic phonetics.

One key point that may demonstrate that Franklin did indeed have access to his work (directly or indirectly) is that Wallis recorded the words “fall” and “folly” as having the same vowel sound (Dobson, 1968, 225). In his RMS, Franklin analyzed them in the same way, that is to say, they were identical qualitatively-speaking and distinct only in terms of length: [ɒ:] vs [ɒ].⁸ In the 1768 manuscript version I have consulted, preserved in the digital archives of the “American Philosophical Society,” never before noticed by linguists who have studied Franklin’s work, the word “fall” is struck out, suggesting that, in the 1779 edition published by Vaughan, he was recalling this minimal pair from memory. Here “fall” is replaced by “ball” in his RMS (Franklin, 1779, 470a) yielding “folly” ~ “ball” (along with “John” and “awl”). Like Wallis and Wilkins, he too says that these vowels are identical qualitatively. I take this to mean [ɒ(:) ~ ɑ(:)].

Can the choice of these minimal pairs be attributed to mere chance? Perhaps, but I believe this is highly unlikely. We shall see below, however, that Wilkins, who wrote in English, cites the same minimal pair and it is perhaps via this route that Franklin selected these words. This observation alone demonstrates that RP /ɔ:/ is a relatively recent innovation (cf. Chapters 22 and 27).

Although Franklin only indicates this difference in vowel length of long [ɒ:] twice in his transcriptions, he does so systematically in his analyses of similar pairs involving <ii> ~ <î> (ex. *did* ~ *deed*, *sin* ~ *seen*) and <e> ~ <ee> (ex. *men(d)* ~ *remain*) (cf. Chapters 16, 17, 25 and 26 for discussion).

Wallis is also thought to be the first orthoepist to distinguish between /ə/ and /ʌ/ as separate phonemes (Dobson, 1968, 227), something that Franklin (and other orthoepists) do not do. For instance, Franklin uses his **u** character to represent phonemic London /ʌ/ [ə ~ ʌ] in both stressed and unstressed syllables (rather

7 This kind of comment suggests that Englishmen at this time believed that English was still only a minor language. I have heard older native speakers of Breton claim precisely the same thing, i.e. that Breton is “not really a language because it has no grammar!”. The implication may be due to the fact that the English basilects were so dominant and fragmented that they felt that no common rules of grammar (or phonology) “could be fixed,” as both Polly Stevenson and Samuel Johnson expressed it (Chapter 25).

8 As Dobson puts it: “there is no difference except in quantity.”

than his own [ʔ ~ ʔ]). This is most likely due to Franklin's conception of language propriety, namely, that all syllables must be clearly pronounced, particularly while reading aloud (cf. Chapter 25). This may lay at the heart of the pedagogical programme for mastering the art of rhetoric and "correct" pronunciation he imagined for his "English school" within his Publick Academy of Philadelphia. Nevertheless, in his transcriptions, he very occasionally indicates unstressed vowels but, when he does, it appears to be the result of lapses in attention (cf. Franklin's prescriptive attitudes towards English pronunciation in Chapter 14). Stevenson does the same. Interestingly, Dobson (1968) describes [ʌ] and [ə] as being contextual variants of the same phoneme /ʌ/, with [ʌ] being used when stressed, [ə] when unstressed.

Furthermore, Wallis distinguishes between voiceless and voiced consonants which he calls "absolute mutes" and "semi-mutes." Claims by Wise (1948) that Franklin did not recognize this distinction is more of an impression than a reality and, although it is true that Franklin does not clearly define them, he uses vague terms such as "dull" and "thin" to do so. I am convinced that Wise's conclusion is due to Franklin's imprecise technical descriptions of the phenomenon (cf. Chapter 25).

Another interesting feature is that Wallis does not always clearly distinguish between long [u:] and short [u] (or [ʊ]) (cf. Dobson, 1968, 239). Franklin never does at all in his transcriptions. Dobson (1968, 225) claims that Wallis' descriptions do not provide any substantially new information about 17th-century pronunciation and that his analyses correspond globally with those of Hart and Robinson before him. Dobson asserts that, in a number of respects, Wallis' work is not as phonetically accurate as Hart's and adds that he may have taken a number of "pairings of long and short vowels" from Hodges (although Wallis does not cite him and, in other contexts, is very critical of his work). Like his predecessors, Wallis also uses diacritics to specify the quality of certain vowels (â, à, é...) while Franklin prefers the use of the circumflex accent to indicate vocalic quantity.

1.8 John Wilkins

John Wilkins was born in 1614, a mere twenty miles from Ecton, Northamptonshire, where Franklin's father, Josiah, was born in 1656. This is the village from which all his paternal side of the family originated, going back to at least the mid-1550s (cf. Chapter 2). Franklin's paternal family came from a long line of blacksmiths. Wilkins, whose father was a goldsmith, had a far superior social standing than Franklin's father and grandfather and, as one might imagine, great wealth.

After graduating from Oxford, Wilkins was appointed to a number of positions, such as Master at Trinity College, Cambridge. Like Wallis, however, he was removed from this post after Charles II acceded to the throne in

1660 on account of his dissenting religious views. He too was a Presbyterian. Nevertheless, Wilkins was eventually appointed bishop of Chester in 1668 but passed away only four years later in 1672.

We have seen that, as a young adolescent (cf. *BF*, p. 18; cf. Chapter 2), Franklin claims to have studied James Greenwood's *Essay towards a Practical English Grammar Describing the Nature and Genius of the English Tongue* (probably the 1711 edition). In this book, Greenwood acknowledges his debt to both Wallis and Wilkins, and others. Could it be from this source that Franklin got the idea of devising a new system of orthography? Considering Franklin's excellent memory, it is not impossible that he recalled these names and, at the first opportunity, took the opportunity to consult their work when he served as a journeyman at Palmer's and Watts' Printing Houses (1724-1725) or, perhaps more likely, that he did so after 1758 while serving as an agent for the American colonies in London. In his preface, Greenwood (1753) writes:

I have in this Book taken in every Thing that was material from Dr. Wallis, but he writes for Foreigners and in Latin, I have not pursued his Methods as not being every where answerable to my Design. I pretend not to call this a Compleat Grammar, no such Thing being to be expected from any one Person but an "Essay," in which I have to the best of my Abilities consulted the Genius of our Language

I must here confess that I have been very much obliged in the following Papers to Bishop Wilkins *Real Character*, Dr. Wallis, Dr. Hickeys *Saxon Grammar*; and I must also take notice, that in two or three Places I have made use of Mr. Lock's Expressions, because I liked them better than my own...

Franklin wrote a letter to Reverend Ezra Stiles on 1 September 1755 in which he states that he had studied Wilkins' book at the age of sixteen and, if we can believe him, he was fairly proficient at understanding its function. Unlike Esperanto, however, which was structured on the basis of natural languages, Wilkins' "philosophical language" was a highly complex scheme that has been described as a taxonomic code consisting of genera, species, etc.

In the following passage, I cite only part of Franklin's technical description of Wilkins' system which the reader can consult on Founders Online.⁹ Wilkin's objective in writing this book was to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge.

I send you my Extracts from Wilkins's *Real Character or Philosophical Language*; tho' I doubt you will find them difficult to understand without having seen the Book itself. The whole Character and Language are in the Broad Sheet. Things or Notions to be express'd are reduc'd, in the preceding Leaves to 40 *Genus*'s, each of which commonly (but not always) makes a Column. Each *Genus* is divided commonly into 6 *Species*, and each *Species* into 8 or 9 *Differences*...There is a little Paper on which you will see some Words formed in *Relation Oeconomical*, that

9 See <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-06-02-0077>

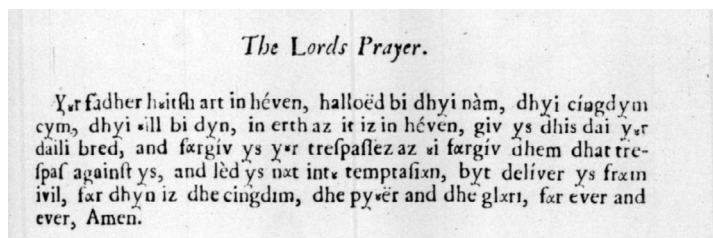
may give you some Idea of the Language, and show how all Words under the same Genus must have the same Beginning, which greatly facilitates the Learning and Understanding of the Language. But the Explanation of the whole requires a Book, and will be too long for a Letter. *I was but a Boy of 16, when I made the Extract, and 34 Years Business has almost effac'd every thing relating to the Language from my Memory; but being at that time much pleas'd with it, I understood a good deal of it, and was and am fully of Opinion, that it could be well learnt in a tenth Part of the time requir'd to learn Latin* (my italics). I wish I could see a Specimen of the new Philosophical Language you mention'd to me.

Wilkins' focus on phonetics, however, is found in Part III of the book entitled "Of the Natural Grammar, or Philosophical Language." If we accept that Franklin had some knowledge of Smith's *De Recta* and, very possibly, Hart's *Orthography*, as well as John Wallis' *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae*, it is obvious from this passage that he exploited more fully the contents of John Wilkins' *Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), in large part because it was written in English. Note as well that the latter two, and possibly Hodges, are almost certainly the scholars that Webster identified as having lived "during the time of Charles I."

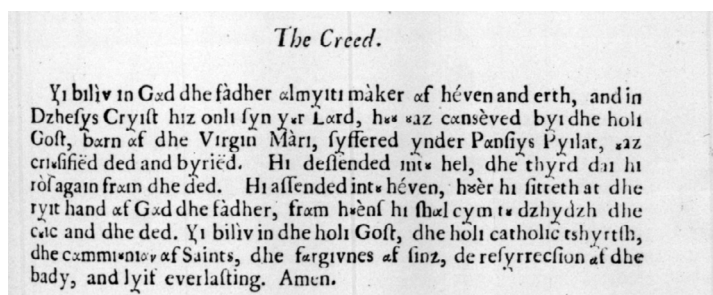
I mentioned earlier that Wilkins and Wallis were the co-founders of the Royal Society to which Franklin was also elected as a fellow in 1756 in recognition for his work on electricity and it may be on his visits to this institution that he was able to consult their work more fully.

That Franklin studied Wilkins' work is thus a certainty. This is reinforced by the fact that Wilkins' transcriptions share a number of technical similarities with the characters that Franklin adopted in his own spelling reform. The most striking resemblance between the two orthographic systems is Wilkin's choice of the symbol <u> which is nearly identical to the one designed by Franklin (i.e. one of his six new characters) and this cannot be accidental. Mazarin (2020, 6) believes it represented /ʁ/ and, based on Grandgent's descriptions of New England short <o> and <u> (cf. Chapter 16, Chapter 21 and Chapter 22), I have come to this same conclusion with regard to Franklin's native pronunciation of *Strut* and *Foot* words. We must keep in mind, however, that the *Strut-Foot* split (i.e. [ʁ ~ ʁ] > [ʌ]) is generally dated to 1600-1640. Once again, the reality on the ground proves otherwise. In 1905, Wright demonstrated that an o-sounding vowel, which he transcribes as [ù], and which I interpret to be a sound close to IPA [ʁ], was still used in both *Strut* and *Foot* words across broad areas of the central Midlands of England. The same was true of New England (Avis, 1971) until recently and especially in Norfolk where this [ʁ] is pronounced to this day (Upton and Tilling, 1970, 1971). For Norfolk, Peter Trudgill, a native of Norwich, analyzes it phonemically as /ʊ/. For all of these reasons, I follow Mazarin's analysis regarding the quality of John Wilkin's u character. My transcription of his rendition of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed is as follows.

Fig. 13.6 Wilkins' transcription of the Lord's Prayer (Wilkins, 1668, 373) and of the Apostles' Creed (Wilkins, 1668, 373), public domain, https://archive.org/details/bim_early-english-books-1641-1700_an-essay-towards-a-real_wilkins-john_1668/page/372/mode/2up



// ʀuɹ 'fæðeɹ hwiʃt 'æɹt in 'hɛ:vən/ 'hæloʊəd bi ðvi 'næ:m/ 'ðvi kɪndɹm
'kɹm/ 'ðvi uil bi 'dɹn, in ɛɹθ æz it iz in 'hɛ:vən/ 'gɪv ɹs ðis 'dæi ʀuɹ
'dæli 'brɛd/ ænd fɹɹ'gɪv ɹs ʀuɹ 'tɹɛspæseɪz æz ui fɹɹ'gɪv ðɛm ðæt 'tɹɛ-
spæs a'gæɪnst ɹs/ ænd 'lɛ:d ɹs 'nɒt intʉ tɛmptasiɒn / bɹt dɛ'li:vɛɹ ɹs frɒm 'i:vɪl/ fɹɹ
'ðɹɪn iz ðɛ kɪndɪm [sic] / ðɛ 'pɹuəɹ ænd ðɛ 'glɒɹi/ fɹɹ 'evɛɹ ænd 'evɛɹ æ'mɛn //



// ɹi biliv in 'gɒd ðɛ 'fæðeɹ ɒl'mɹiti 'mæ:kɹɹ nɒ 'hɛ:vən ænd ɛɹθ, ænd in dʒɛsɹs
'kɹɪst hɪz ɒnli 'sɹn ʀuɹ 'lɒɹd / 'hu: waz kɒn'se:vɛd bɹi ðɛ 'hɒli 'gɒst /'bɹɒn ɒf ðɛ
'vɹɹɹɹ [sic] 'mæ:ɹi / 'sɹfɛɹɛd ɹnder pɒnsɹɹs 'pɹɪlæt / waz 'kɹɹusi:fɛd 'dɛd and 'bɹɹɹɛd
// hi dɛ'sɛndɛd intʉ 'hɛl / ðɛ θɹɹɹd 'dæi hi 'rɒ:s a'gæɪn frɒm ðɛ 'dɛd // hi a'sɛndɛd intʉ
'hɛ:vən / 'hwɛ:ɹ hi 'sitɛθ æt ðɛ 'ɹɹɹt hænd ɒf 'gɒd ðɛ 'fæ:ðeɹ / frɒm 'hwɛns hi ʃɒl¹⁰
'kɹm tu 'dʒɹdʒ ðɛ 'kwɪk and ðɛ 'dɛd / ɹi biliv in ðɛ 'hɒli 'gɒst / ðɛ 'hɒli 'kæθɒlɪk 'tʃɹɹtʃ
ðɛ kɒ'miunion ɒf 'sæɪnts / ðɛ fɹɹ'gɪvnes ɒf 'sɪnz / dɛ [sic] ɹɛsɹ'ɹɛksiɒn ɒf ðɛ 'badi /
ænd 'bɹɹt 'evɛɹ'læstɪŋ // æ'mɛn

Based on this evidence, it is virtually certain that Franklin borrowed Wilkins' *u* character from his *Real Character*. It appears as a simple vowel corresponding to both orthographic <o> and <u>: *son*, *suffered*, *buried*, *come* and *judge*, just as in Franklin's poems. As we shall see, the value of *u* as a cardinal vowel is far easier to explain diachronically: [ɹ ~ ʏ] < ME /u/ and ME /o/ < [ʏ] represent

10 I had some doubt about this lowered value of Wilkins' pronunciation of "shall" [ʃɒl], but this realization is confirmed previously by Hart's transcription of *shall* as *shawl*. Webster signals this low back pronunciation in America in *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789, 114). Ellis (1869, 1067) does the same.

conservative pronunciations prior to their lowering to [ʌ] (cf. Wells 1988, 199). The question is whether Franklin interpreted the value of **y** in the same way in his **yi** diphthong. Considering that he uses the same **y** proto-phonemic symbol to do so, this would seem be a moot point.

Mazarin (2020, 6 (cf. Chapter 16)) also transcribes Cooper's *Price* words as [ɣi] (1680s) (ibid., 17) whereas Dobson interprets it as [ʌi] (cf. 1968, 255). In this passage, it appears as the introductory element of the diphthong **yi** [ɣi] (or [ɣi]) in the following words: *I, almighty, Christ, by, Pilot, right, light*. We shall see in Chapter 16, however, that explaining how ME /i:/ developed a back onset vowel is rather difficult to explain given that it involves two different processes: direct downward shift from ME /i:/ > RP/GA /aɪ/ but, somewhere along the line centralization and backing. For this reason, [əi] and [ʌi] variants for the *Price* diphthong must also have been common, alongside older [ei] variables. Note that Wilkins also uses this **y** character as the onset vowel of the *Mouth* diphthong in *our yur* [ɣuɪ] (where Franklin gives *aaau* the value of [ʊ]). **y** also precedes /r/ in *third* and *church*. Finally, we find it in unstressed final position in *Jesus*, *Pontius* and *resurrection*. How are we to interpret these examples, literally as [ɣ], or as reduced [ə]?

Mazarin (2020, 6) proposes that Wilkins borrowed this character from Welsh <y>. Having said this, although Welsh orthographic <y> can be pronounced [ə], it can also be realized as [i: ~ i:̃]. In words where <y> appears medially and in word-final position, as in *Cymry* ("the Welsh people"), the first <y> is pronounced [ə] but the second [i], i.e. ['kəmri].

We know that Franklin had strong Welsh connections in Pennsylvania, where numerous Welsh-speaking North Walian dissenters had settled. His business partner and fellow printer, Hugh Meredith, is the leading example. While in Great Britain, he also became fast friends with Richard Price and Sir William Jones. In addition to being political allies, they were both Welsh speakers. Here too, I believe that it is likely that Webster's interest in Welsh and Breton languages, that he discusses in some detail in the first part of his *Dissertations on the English Language*, may have arisen during his 1786 discussions with Franklin (cf. Chapters 29 and 30). Note that Franklin includes Welsh-language proverbs (with no translations) in his *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1733-1758).¹¹

Both Franklin and Wilkins transcribe words such as *third*, *sir*, *stir* and also *church* and *buried* with <yr>. If Wilkin's <yr> has the value of [ɣɪ ~ əɪ], it demonstrates that centralization was well under way in the 17th century. However, note Wilkins' pronunciation of "virgin," with [ir ~ ɪr] (and ['kɪndɪrɪm] vs ['kɪndɪm]).

11 In his *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Franklin includes a number of Welsh-language proverbs to please his Welsh Quaker friends, but no more than this.

If Franklin did copy Wilkin's **u** character, one wonders why he did not adopt his other characters too? Secondly, we see that Wilkins does not have a single character to represent [θ] and [ð]. Instead, he uses the digraph <th> for [θ] and <dh> for [ð] violating the principle of "one letter for one sound." Although Franklin did create new characters for these sounds, when he describes them in his RMS (1768, 1779, 468, 470a), like Wilkins, he represents them respectively as <th> and <dh> (cf. Chapter 26). Having said this, these digraphs were commonly used by other orthoepists.

Note that Wilkins' transcription of "body" with <a> is an example of the tendency to lower and front certain *Lot* words, a stylish realization that was popular in the 16th century at the court of England and presumably pronounced [a(:)] for (ɑ(:)?]) by Queen Elizabeth I? (cf. Görlach (2012) and Lass (1999)). We shall see examples such as *stap* or *Gad* for "stop" or "God." Considering that Wilkins was from Northamptonshire, his pronunciation of <a> may have been closer to that of West Country (and northern) speakers rather than that of eastern England, in other words, [a(:) ~ ɑ(:)?] (cf. Chapters 19 and 22). The fronted [a:] pronunciations can still be heard in some northern varieties of American English around the Great Lakes.

Although I may be mistaken, I take Wilkins' <é> to represent its French counterpart; front high-mid [ɛ]. If this interpretation is correct, and if it was retained in 18th-century Massachusetts, it would explain the dozens of rhymes by the New England poets who consistently match "heaven" with words such as *driven*, *given*, *driven*, *striven* and *even* (*pin-pen* merger, cf. Chapter 18). If so, his <è> is probably the equivalent of French <è> [ɛ(:)]: *huèns* [huɛns], *consèved* [kɔn'sɛ:vd]. Presumably his <à> represents [a ~ æ]. Hence his "Mary," "father" and "maker" are pronounced ['ma(:)ri], ['fa(:)ðər] and ['ma(:)kər] respectively. Finally, his <ë> appears to correspond to [ə] as in "crucified" [kɹusi'fi-əd] and "buried" [bʊri-əd]. Note that buried is pronounced ['bɛəri:d] in Pennsylvania.

Wilkins also uses the Greek character <α> (*Gad*, *almȳiti*, *αf*, etc.), pronounced [ɒ: ~ ɑ:] as in General American today. Dobson (1968, 259) opts for [ɑ:] in this case. Franklin, on the other hand, designed a symbol which appears to fuse these two characters <α> into one (cf. Chapters 25 and 26) which I reproduce here as <aa>. It appears to share the same value. Note that this is not quite the form he or Stevenson give it in their initial manuscript transcriptions of this character (cf. Chapter 25 and Appendices 1, 2).

In addition, like Wallis and Hart, neither man renders GA/RP glides [j] and [w] as <i> and <u> for the good reason that these were not recognized as glides until the 18th or 19th centuries. Here too, there is early dialectal evidence to support that they were perceived as weakly articulated vowels rather than glides (cf. Chapters 23 and 27). Note that Sir Isaac Newton also adopted this same mode of transcription, as did Hart long before him.

Wilkins uses <tsh> and <dzh> to represent [tʃ] and [dʒ] because he perceives these affricates as clusters: [t + ʃ] and [d + ʒ]. Note that Smith used <c> and <z> respectively, considering them both to be simple phonemes, not affricates. Both Wilkins and Franklin have difficulty representing [ʒ], which Franklin transcribes in a curious way that is equivalent to IPA [ʒʃ], whereas Wilkins transcribes it as <zʰ> [ʒ], the logical counterpart of voiceless <sh> [ʃ] in his scheme. Franklin's affricate thus resembles <**dzʃ**> for [dʒ]. Likewise, Franklin gives <**tʃ**> (i.e., [tʃ]) as the voiceless counterpart, whereas Wilkins has <tsh> [tʃ]. One of the weaknesses of Franklin's system is that his characters for /ʃ/, /θ/ and /ð/ resemble orthographic <h> and are easily confused (cf. Chapter 27).

Following the tradition established by Smith and Wallis, Wilkins also provides detailed technical phonetic descriptions of each "sound" his characters they represent. He does so, however, by presenting them in the form of a series of drawings with each indicating the way they are articulated. In this way, he represents stops, fricatives and nasals showing various articulatory aspects of each pronunciation: apico-alveolars, dentals, bilabials.... Wilkins' presentations of back vowels indicate rounding of the lips in a number of instances, characteristics which Franklin also indicates (but only for /u/). Although his descriptions are far from being precise, Franklin also describes each of his characters in a surprisingly systematic and coherent way for his day and age (cf. Chapters 25-28). We have seen that these attempts at detailed scientific descriptions for each sound began with Smith, Wallis and Wilkins. Franklin merely appears to have followed this rich tradition.

1.9 Edward Lhuyd

Edward Lhuyd is an interesting character and yet, on the face of it, one might wonder why on earth Franklin could have been interested in a Welsh-language scholar who is widely acclaimed as the founder of Celtic studies. Although Abbé Pezron, a Breton priest and scholar, was among the first to have identified the Breton and Welsh languages as modern offshoots of "Gaulish" and "Celtic" (the terms were often used synonymously), Lhuyd, in his masterly *Archaeologia Britannia* (1707), was the first to propose a coherent analysis of the linguistic and cultural bonds between not only the Brythonic languages (Welsh, Breton and Cornish) but also the Gaelic or Goidelic languages (Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx) which Celticists now differentiate as P-Celtic and Q-Celtic respectively. In so doing, Lhuyd invented his own phonetic orthography to present the phonology of the various Celtic languages (for instance, <th> /θ/, <dh> /ð/, <sh>

/ʃ/, <zh> /ʒ/,¹² <x> /x ~ h/, gh> /ʁ/ (voiced velar fricative...)).

Why is this significant? We have just seen that Franklin had many close connections with Welsh speakers, both in Pennsylvania and in Britain. We have already mentioned that Hugh Meredith was his first partner and associate when they founded their printing house together in Philadelphia (cf. Chapter 3). Secondly, we have also seen that Franklin occasionally printed Welsh-language sayings and proverbs in his *Poor Richards Almanack*, showing that he had genuine interest in the language (see Franklin's choice of his <u> character, section 1.8 above). Furthermore, while in London, he became fast friends with Sir William Jones and Richard Price. Furthermore, although Jones was raised in England, his father was a native Welsh-speaker from Anglesey (Ynys Mon), North Wales, who had taught his son Welsh. Welsh was also Richard Price's mother tongue (southwest Dyfed). Both men certainly knew of Edward Lhuyd's work and could not have failed to speak of Lhuyd during their frequent discussions about language, literature and other matters. It is almost certainly here that Franklin became aware of Lhuyd's work. Franklin's inquisitive mind would thus have been particularly interested in his phonetic alphabet.

Significantly, Webster also took great interest in Edward Lhuyd's work and, citing him three times, devotes an entire discussion to the Celtic languages in the first part of his *Dissertations on the English Language*. He focuses in particular on Welsh and Breton (which he also calls Armoric, from Armorica, the old Gaulish name of Brittany).

My point here is that when Webster and Franklin met in Philadelphia in 1786, Franklin groomed him to be his successor in an attempt to launch an orthographic reform in America. We shall see that Polly wrote Franklin a letter in 1775 encouraging him to do just that (Chapters 29-30). As a consequence of the Revolutionary War, Franklin did not receive the letter until ten years later in 1785, one year before he first met Webster. I have pointed out above that he also gave Webster the six new lead characters that he had cast in London at Watts' Printing House in London. He also gave him all his notes on the subject. In this way, these papers may have included not only the name of Sir Thomas Smith but also all of the others mentioned above. During their discussions, it is likely that he stressed that Webster should consult the work of previous orthoepists. It is also likely that he mentioned Lhuyd's work among them. Webster, as I have stated above, very diligently followed Franklin's advice in many respects but, as we shall see in Chapters 29 and 30, he flatly rejected Franklin's system and settled on imposing his own orthographic model which, sadly, was deficient in many fundamental respects.

12 We shall see in Chapter 25, that Franklin had considerable difficulty representing IPA /ʒ/ which he transcribes as <zj>.

1.10 Christopher Cooper

Christopher Cooper is the last of the great 17th-century spelling reformers, but also one of the least well known. Of extremely humble origins, it has been deduced (Dobson, 1968, 281) that he was a “charity boy” of the poorhouse of Buntingford in North Hertfordshire. He was born at some time around 1650 and, obviously a highly intelligent young man and despite his wretchedly poor beginnings, was admitted to Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1672.

He wrote his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* in 1685 and his English edition, *The English Teacher of the Discovery of the Art of Teaching and Learning the English Tongue*, in 1687. His reasons for writing these books are twofold. The Latin-language edition was written with the intention of helping foreigners to learn English more easily. The English edition, as the title indicates, was intended for English schoolchildren.

Given his social origins, one can assume that one of his main concerns, like Franklin and Spence during the following century, was to assist the children of common birth to master a form of disparitary English which would enable them to have better access to religious learning but also, presumably, to allow them to rise socially. The Latin-language edition cites his indebtedness to his predecessors, Gil and Butler among them, but especially Wallis and Wilkins. He heaps lavish praise on Wallis in particular.

Cooper identifies thirty-two sounds, which he represents by twenty-four characters. The discrepancy is explained by the fact that he uses the same symbol for certain vowels which can be either short or long. Unlike Wallis, however, and along with Holder and Wilkins, Cooper clearly explains the function of voicing. Wilkins’ influence on Cooper appears in his use of the Greek character < α > for [ɒ] or perhaps [ɑ], as well as in the choice of certain technical terms (not retained by Franklin).

Again, like those before him, and like Franklin himself, Cooper complains that one of the chief difficulties for foreigners is that often the same letter is used to express different sounds, hence the necessity to harmonize the number of symbols.

After leaving Cambridge, however, Cooper was named headmaster of an obscure school in Hertfordshire where he also served his community as the parish vicar. He spent the last four years of his life at Oxford, where he died in 1698. Dobson (1968, 281) writes that Cooper had little scholarly influence during his lifetime but goes on to argue that Cooper’s scheme was more advanced than either Wallis’ or Wilkins’ work in “several important ways.”

Cooper and Franklin shared the conviction (cf. Chapter 6) that Great Britain’s military successes on land and at sea would ensure not only its imperial expansion but also the global diffusion of English language and culture. He

was almost certainly referring to Britain's recent settlements in Ireland and the rapid growth of Britain's North American colonies and other overseas possessions. Linguistically, the ultimate goal was to secure the dominance of the English language and the displacement of rival languages and cultural traditions (Dobson, 1968, 284).

Until his final political humiliation before the House of Lords in early 1775, Franklin was persuaded that the American colonies could play a central role in guaranteeing Great Britain's dominance worldwide.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of Cooper's work, I am not convinced that Franklin was even aware of Christopher Cooper's existence and, even if he had been, it is not certain he could have had access to his *The English Teacher*. Nevertheless, at a more profound level, linked to the socioreligious English traditions discussed in Part I (Chapters 1-9), both Franklin and Cooper shared a similar metaphysical sense of duty to improve the lives and elevate the conditions of their least fortunate fellow British citizens (cf. Franklin and Spence, Chapter 14).

Conclusion

Here I shall stop this selective discussion of the 16th- and 17th-century spelling reformers. Some of these clearly had an influence on Franklin's RMS, whether direct or indirect. Sadly, we probably will never know precisely to which extent. In terms of ideas, approach and the details of his reform, of all the 17th- and 18th-century orthoepists discussed above, those who appear to have exercised the greatest influence on Franklin are John Hart and John Wilkins. Furthermore, while Smith's work may have inspired Franklin to write his reform and he undoubtedly saw him as the precursor who laid the groundwork for all later attempts to reform English orthography. Because his level of knowledge of Latin is difficult to ascertain, the degree to which he was able to exploit Smith's *De Recta* or John Wallis' *Grammatica* is questionable. Moreover, unlike Webster, Franklin never quotes any of these men, in English or in Latin.

14. Franklin the Prescriptivist: His Views on Language Propriety

Introduction

From the evidence examined in the last chapter, the overt influences on Franklin's reform appear to be limited to the work of 16th- and 17th-century orthoepists and simply stop there. Based on this evidence, it does not appear that Franklin had access to, or was much interested in, the work of 18th-century orthoepists such as Sheridan, Buchanan or lesser-known orthoepists. This will be followed by a discussion on the linguistic insecurity of provincial phoneticians, such as Franklin, Spence, Douglas and others, and the motivations behind what I have referred to as social and linguistic "mimicry" (cf. Sand, 2000).

In the second half of this chapter, we turn our attention to Franklin's prescriptive views on language and the deeper reasons for his vision of language decorum. We shall also see that, in terms of language change, Franklin's New England English lagged behind the innovations that can be observed in London and surrounding area. Thanks to the 17th-century New England and New York town records, we can be confident that the same phonetic innovations were present in the North American colonies. However, the difference is that the upper echelons of colonial society appear to have clung to many formerly prestigious features of pronunciation, in the same way that some individuals might continue to wear clothing that, in the minds of the most fashion-conscious individuals, has long gone out of style. In this regard, Franklin's RMS proto-phonemic model marks a radical about-face in favour of innovative London-style pronunciations.

1. Franklin and the 18th-Century Orthoepists

It was the traces of Franklin's conservative idiolect that had crept into his RMS that attracted Alexander Ellis' attention and encouraged him to study Franklin's phonological scheme and transcriptions (cf. Chapter 28). In particular, Ellis was fascinated by the dialectal descriptions of late 18th-century American English

provided by Noah Webster in his *Dissertations on the English Language*. For him, the language he described was a reflection of late 17th- and early 18th-century English pronunciation (Ellis, 1869, 1060, 1064). As we shall see from the evidence gathered throughout Part III, he was generally correct in his analysis. The evidence accrued here suggests that Franklin's New England accent was highly conservative to a far greater degree than has been previously imagined.

Beal (1999, 25-26) points out that, although there were exceptions, there existed a "generally accepted rule that a spelling reform was no longer a 'live issue in the eighteenth century.'" Citing Abercrombie's "Forgotten Phoneticians of the Eighteenth Century" (1948) (Franklin is not included among them), she discusses the work of three 18th-century spelling reformers, only two of whom Franklin could possibly have consulted, namely *Magazine, or, Animadversions on the English Spelling* by G. W. (1703) and the anonymous author of *The Needful Attempt to Make Language and Divinity Plain and Easie* (1711) (cf. Abercrombie, 1948, 11). The chance that Franklin would even have been aware of the existence of these works is fairly remote.

Nor have I found any evidence that he consulted the work of any 18th-century orthoepists prior to the drafting of his *Reformed Mode of Spelling* in 1768. It is known that Franklin met Samuel Johnson on at least one occasion but, on account of their marked political and religious differences (Johnson was a Tory, a loyal subject of the Crown and an Anglican), the two men took an instant dislike to each other. Although they lived only a mile from one another, they apparently never sought to meet again. Nevertheless, despite this, they appear to have shared a certain tacit mutual respect.¹ Franklin almost certainly had consulted Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), but it was not a pronouncing dictionary. We shall see that one thing they certainly agreed upon was clear articulation, even of final unstressed syllables.

Furthermore, from 1758 onward, nearly all of Franklin's professional activities were taken up with his long, dispiriting struggle to defend the rights of the American colonists, a battle from which he ultimately emerged defeated and disgraced. He had little time to devote to matters of language.

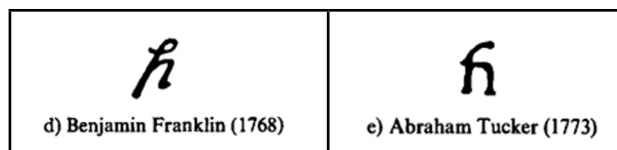
The only contemporary works dealing with orthoepy that he could have consulted were those of James Buchanan and Thomas Sheridan. Buchanan, a Scot, had published three books around this time, his *Linguae Britannicae Vera Pronunciation* (1757), his *The British Grammar* (1762) and, finally, his *An Essay Towards Establishing a Standard for an Elegant and Uniform Pronunciation of the English Language* (1766). As for Thomas Sheridan, an Irishman, he published his *A Discourse Being Introductory to his Course of Lectures on Elocution and*

1 Samuel Johnson was fiercely loyal to the Crown. He was infuriated by the Americans' recriminations, demands for greater rights and refusal to pay taxes. He nevertheless cites Franklin in his dictionary with regard to his scientific work on lightning and electricity.

the English Language in 1759 and a second book in 1761 entitled *A Dissertation on the Causes of the Difficulties which Occur in Learning the English Tongue*. His third publication, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* came out the following year. For reasons that will be outlined below, if he did consult these books, he must not have approved of their approach.

Among the “forgotten phoneticians” identified by Abercrombie (ibid.) was Abraham Tucker, the author of *Vocal Sounds* (1773) the purpose of which was to contribute a new phonetic system that could be specifically used for the study of language. Here, however, there is one minor detail that attracted my attention. Although he does not draw any conclusions from this, Abercrombie (1981, 214) shows the similarity between Abraham Tucker’s and Franklin’s “h-like” symbol to represent IPA /ʃ/.

Fig. 14.1 A comparison of Franklin and Tucker’s character for /ʃ/ (adapted from Abercrombie, 1981, 214).



Given that Tucker’s book came out five years after Franklin had drafted his reform and sent it to Stevenson, there is no chance that he could have borrowed the character from Tucker’s work. Franklin’s RMS existed only in manuscript form at this time (cf. Appendix 2 to view his table of vowels and consonants of July 1768) and Stevenson was probably the only person to have seen it (aside from Joseph Priestley and Sir William Jones?) until Vaughan published the RMS in 1779. This would seem to exclude any possibility that Tucker could have been inspired by Franklin. Therefore, I cannot see how this could be anything else than a coincidence... unless both men were influenced by a third source unknown to me.

Finally, W. Kenrick published his 1773 *A New Dictionary of the English Language* and W. Perry published his *The Royal Standard English Dictionary* in 1775, the same year as T. Spence’s *The Grand Repository of the English Language* (Newcastle: T. Saint), all three long after Franklin had conceived his RMS (cf. Appendix 2). There is little doubt in my mind that, aside from having consulted and having been inspired by the 16th- and 17th-century orthoepists discussed in Chapter 13, Franklin’s RMS was largely the fruit of his own work and observations of London English. Furthermore, I shall demonstrate that the 1768 manuscript version of Franklin’s orthographic scheme RMS that he posted to Polly Stevenson in July 1768 was virtually identical with Vaughan’s 1779 edition (cf. Chapter 25). This means

that no later inclusions from the sources just cited could have been added to this final publication of the RMS.

Again, I doubt very much that Franklin's scheme could have been made known to people outside his immediate circle of confidants prior to the publication of RMS. Both Vaughan and Stevenson visited in Passy, near Paris, while Franklin was the American Plenipotentiary to France, but this was after the publication of Franklin's *Political, Miscellaneous and Philosophical Pieces Written by Benjamin Franklin*. The only possibility I can imagine regarding the possible transmission of his 1768 manuscript version to Vaughan prior to 1779 is if Franklin would have posted copies of his notes and the six new phonetic characters to him prior to the publishing of the RMS. Another possibility is that Polly and Vaughan, who were both living in London at this time, communicated ideas about the publication of the RMS while Franklin was in Passy. I have found no evidence of this, however. Whatever the case may be, Franklin's original letter to Polly and accompanying consonant and vowel table with additional commentaries and remarks that he posted to her in July 1768, as well as her transcribed 26 September response to him, were still in her possession when she passed away in Pennsylvania in 1795. Was the latter a copy of the original she sent him? This question will be considered in Chapter 25.

As alluded to in the preceding paragraph, the only potential contemporary influences on Franklin could have come from his two friends, Sir William Jones and Joseph Priestley, who met with him twice a month in their Club of Honest Whigs. Both men were interested in the philosophy of language, and questions of language propriety must have been at least one important topic of discussion among many others. Priestley wrote his *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language* in 1762, well before Franklin had put his ideas about his proto-phonemic scheme on paper. Looby (1984, 20) also considers that discussions on the question of language were shared between Priestley and Franklin (he makes no mention of Jones in his article). Looby quotes Priestley as writing:

It is a great inconvenience attending the orthography of all modern languages, that the pronunciation doth not correspond with the writing but that the same letters have different sounds, and the same sounds are often expressed by different letters, some letters also, according to the pronunciation, are superfluous in some words; in others, letters are wanting. (1984, 20)

All of this echoes the generally held views of the 17th-century orthoepists, including Franklin's own arguments. Nevertheless, in Priestley's book *Rudiments of English Grammar*, which Straaijer (2011, 4) describes as his most important book of grammar, I found that Priestley's study of English pronunciation is restricted to a few very superficial remarks (Priestley, 1761, 1-3). I should add in passing that I found no mention in Straaijer's thesis of any linguistic connection

between Franklin and Priestley (more on this in Chapters 29 and 30), although he does discuss their shared scientific interests.

1.1 Franklin's Linguistic Insecurity

All in all, it seems improbable that Franklin was inspired by any contemporary orthoepist. This might be explained by the fact that Franklin lived in London almost continuously between 1757 and 1775 and was in daily contact for many years with some of the most illustrious, best educated men and women in England. If his model was based on cultivated London English as I suspect, could it be that he felt sufficiently competent to define, in broad terms, the characteristics of their prescribed speech. Having said this, after discovering the existence of a previously missing July 20, 1768 letter that he wrote to Polly Stevenson, in which he solicits her assistance in correcting his new orthographic system, it is very likely that he suffered from a degree of linguistic insecurity when expressing himself orally (cf. Chapter 25 for more discussion).² Recall that he confesses in his *Autobiography* that he never considered himself to be an eloquent speaker. When discussing his debates with his friend Collins, he writes:

He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words; and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. (BE, p. 16)

Speaking of his best friend, James Ralph (1724-1725), he writes:

Ralph was ingenious, genteel in his manners, and extremely eloquent; I think I never knew a prettier talker.

On the other hand, Ralph was far less positive with regard to Franklin's eloquence. Although he praises his writing skills, he insists on how inarticulate he was.

“But who would have imagin'd,” said he, “that Franklin had been capable of such a performance; such painting, such force, such fire! He has even improv'd the original. In his common conversation he seems to have no choice of words; he hesitates and blunders; and yet, good God! how he writes!” (BE, pp. 38-39).

Writing in Passy in 1784, he again admits that:

I was but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in language, and yet I generally carried my points (BE, p. 92).

2 The first mention of this letter, as far as I am aware, was by Willcox (1972). As we have seen, Isaacson (2003), Franklin's biographer, cites a passage from this same letter making light of Franklin's transcription. Finally, Twilley (2006) refers to it as well, but makes no remark about either its linguistic significance or the fact that Franklin was using Stevenson as an informant to construct an alphabet reflecting a London model of pronunciation.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, despite the comparative shortness of his contribution, I shall argue Franklin's RMS should be considered to be not only one of the forerunners of a standard pronouncing dictionary (even if he never realized this project), but that his proto-phonological system was firmly based on the concept of "one letter for one sound" and the presentation of plan represents one of the precursors, again, albeit incomplete, of the IPA. From this point of view, Franklin appears to be the first 18th-century orthoepist to have proposed a complete spelling reform, followed shortly after by Thomas Spence (1775). As we shall see in Part IV (Chapters 25 and 26), his RMS also contained other innovations that prefigured a certain number of modern linguistic concepts, such as the notion of the phoneme, minimal pairs, and what was to become the IPA method of representing the English vocalic system.

In this chapter, however, the main concentration will be on contemporary 18th-century attitudes towards language propriety in England and America. This will be examined primarily from a sociolinguistic perspective.

2. Franklin and Spence: "Knowledge Frees"

Among the 18th-century orthoepists is Joseph Spence. He deserves special attention here, not because Franklin or Spence exerted any influence on each other's phonetic systems but rather on account of their shared motivations for producing their respective pronouncing dictionaries. In producing his *Great Repository* (1775), Spence was striving to produce a new orthographic system based on a system of pronunciation approximating the proto-RP model that was taking shape in London and promoted by men such as Kenrick, Nares and Walker. Accomplishing this goal, he believed, would assist northern Englishmen in acquiring a modified standard pronunciation that would be acceptable to middle-class speakers in the North and South. Explaining the details of his orthographic/phonetic scheme was the focus of a major work undertaken by Joan Beal in her very thorough study entitled *English Pronunciation in the Eighteenth Century: Thomas Spence's Grand Repository of the English Language* (1999).

Spence, perhaps more than any other 18th-century spelling reformer, most resembles Franklin in terms of his social commitment. Both men firmly believed that their respective spelling reforms would offer the poor and unlettered not only orthographic systems that would help them to acquire literacy more rapidly but also a pronunciation guide that would give them more respectability in educated circles. Put another way, linguistic convergence towards the London standard was the objective of both men. Once literacy was achieved, further education would follow and, ultimately, result in social and economic promotion. Only in this way could common people gain control over their own lives and futures. By breaking the shackles of ignorance that had enchained the

lower classes for centuries, they could now become the intellectual equals of the members of the aristocratic class which ruled over them.

Looby (1984, 2) assessment is spot on in this respect: “Franklin’s spelling reforms are properly understood as political designs. That is, his linguistic reforms were a means to political ends, chiefly, I will argue, the occultation of class. This is not to deny that Franklin cared about language for itself.”

In certain respects, as the sons of Presbyterian Dissenters, the two men’s religious affiliations and poor upbringing certainly played a role in their commitments. In this sense, their struggle to improve the lives of their fellow working-class compatriots was primordial. Having said this, neither man had ever met the other and, from what I can gather, Spence was unaware of Franklin’s venture into orthoepy seven years before him.

Thomas Spence was born on June 21, 1750, in the Quayside neighbourhood of Newcastle upon Tyne (forty-four years after Franklin’s birth). As Beal informs us, this was one of the poorest parts of Newcastle at that time. Spence’s father was a Scot who was variously engaged as a netmaker and a cobbler and, finally, as a hardware dealer. His early life is reminiscent of Franklin’s in that both their fathers prepared them for manual trades as children. Citing Ashraf (1983, 12), Beal (1999, 1), informs us that Spence worked under his father supervision as a netmaker starting at the age of ten. Franklin also started work at the same age assisting his father as a tallow-chandler, an occupation he had for two years. Later he tried his hand at bricklaying and cutlery. Franklin’s dream as a boy was to go to sea, but his father forbade him to follow the path after his oldest son, Josiah Jr., was lost at sea.

The sons being zealous Presbyterians, their early education was marked by frequent religious debates and discussions at the dinner table and at church. In his *The Important Trial of Thomas Spence*, Spence writes that his father used to “make my brothers and me read the Bible to him while working in his business, and at the end of every chapter, *encouraged us to give our opinions on what we had just read. By these means I acquired an early habit of reflecting on every occurrence which passed before me, as well as on what I read*” (my italics) (Spence, 1803, 65; quoted from Waters, 1917, 65, in Beal, 1999, 1). Compare this to Franklin’s near identical account of his childhood at the same age as well as the intellectual stimulation encouraged by both their fathers.

At his table he liked to have, as often as he could, some sensible friend or neighbor to converse with, and always took care to start some ingenious or useful topic for discourse, which might tend to improve the minds of his children. By this means he turned our attention to what was good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life. (BF, p. 12)

Franklin also asserted that the source of his fondness for “disputing” (i.e. debating), and hence his desire to master formal English, stemmed from the

discussions at the supper table but also from having read the Bible from cover to cover as well as his father's books on "polemic divinity" which he read in detail (cf. Chapters 2 and 4).

Like Franklin, Spence's family stood squarely in the radical Whig tradition discussed in Chapter 1. However, this is where the similarities come to a screeching halt. From a modern perspective, Spence's family would be considered far more to the "left" of the Whig political spectrum than Franklin in the sense that Spence's father and uncle were Glassites, a Presbyterian splinter-group of Congregationalists who were in favour of the communal ownership of property, as had been the practice of the fathers of early church history (Beal, 1999, 1). Franklin, on the contrary, firmly believed that the way forward for the poor was based on hard work, frugality, a merciless business ethic and ambition. In short, for Franklin, engaging in private enterprise and ownership was at the heart of a successful life. Indeed, the avowed purpose of his *Autobiography* and his *Art of Virtue* were to provide models for young people showing them how to advance socially and become rich. That the underclasses should become the intellectual but also economic equals of English aristocrats or gentlemen was his fundamental goal. Once again, this meant the moral and intellectual *raison d'être* for the Great Chain of Being.

Franklin and Spence's political views with regard to the monarchy were similar. Beal (1999, 5) summarizes the political climate in London during the American and French Revolutions and, as a consequence, the paranoia that gripped the ruling establishment of Britain. During this time, reaction to any writings judged to be subversive was even more intense after Franklin's return to Philadelphia in 1775 (and yet Franklin's writings were published in London in 1779!).

Certainly, Spence arrived at the capital in what were dangerous and exciting times for a man of his convictions: the French Revolution of 1789 had instilled in the Government and its institutions a dread of a similar uprising in Britain, leading to heavy repression of what we might loosely term "radical" ideas. The works of Thomas Paine were especially singled out as likely to incite the lower orders to revolution and Paine was denounced and caricatured in what amounted to a "propaganda war" of pamphleteers in the 1790s. (Beal, 1999, 5)

In passing, here too Franklin played a powerful and personal role in promoting Thomas Paine's revolutionary ideals in America by printing his pamphlets, "American Crisis" and "Common Sense." It is Franklin also who convinced Paine to actively support the American cause during the Revolution. Nevertheless, the fact that such literature was allowed to be printed at all without censorship or obstruction by the royal authorities shows a remarkable degree of freedom of speech that is laudable even by modern standards.

As we saw in Part I, and as expressed in Beal's citation above, the monarchy's feelings of dread were well founded and, after the fall of the Bastille and the

beheading of the king and queen of France in 1793, the English Crown and their Tory allies rightly feared that their own people might rise up against them, just as Franklin and his fellow revolutionaries had done in America fourteen years previously. Spence was working toward a similar goal but from within English society.

2.1 Which Linguistic Model for Provincial English Speakers?

This discussion raises the following questions. Why would Spence and Franklin have advocated a model of pronunciation approximating the polite speech of London rather than a more polished variety of their own? Secondly, what linguistic models were available for provincial British speakers of regional English at time when no phonetic alphabet was in use and when most speakers rarely ever heard speakers with cultivated London accents?

In all these respects, Franklin had much in common with northern Englishmen, Irishmen, Welshmen and Scots. Both Franklin and Spence believed without question that teaching the humblest members of society to read and write as well as providing them with a mesolectal model of pronunciation was the only way to bring about social change. Knowledge frees.

Simply put, like a number of the earlier orthoepists who preceded them, both Franklin and Spence were convinced that their respective spelling reforms would have a liberating effect on the people. The link between education and politics is patent as can be seen in Spence's assertion:

When I first began to study, I found every art and science a perfect whole. Nothing was in anarchy but language and politics. But both of these I reduced to order, the one by a new alphabet, the other by a new Constitution... (Beal, 1999, 8; Spence, 1803, 59; quoted from Waters, 1917 59)

Spence's objective was precisely the same as Franklin's, to allow the "very poorest" to "learn as much in a Month, as formerly in a Year" and acquire "such Notions of Justice, and Equity, and of the Rights of Mankind, as rendered unsupportable, every species of Oppression" (Beal, 1999, 8; 1782a, 40, quoted in Shields, 1974, 44). Franklin makes precisely the same kind of remark with regard to his own scheme saying that those who would memorize and pronounce the letters of his alphabet would be immediately capable for reading and writing "within a week" (Franklin, 1779, 474).

What is significant here is that, in the minds of both men, the model of pronunciation had to be of a type which would conform as much as possible to that of the English elites in London or at least a type of English pronunciation that the latter would consider acceptable and sufficiently elegant.

In Chapters 1, 10 and 11, I argued that speakers of a stigmatized basilect are nearly always conscious that their speech is a marker of their own social and,

often, intellectual inferiority. It has been my experience that, in the minds of most well-educated standard speakers, even nowadays, have integrated a form of mathematical logic resembling what is known as the “transitive property of an equivalence relation,” namely, if $A = B$ and $B = C$ then $A = C$. If “non-standard English” is a sign of “ignorance,” “vulgarity,” “laziness,” “sloppiness,” (cf. Shorrocks, 1998), etc. and a given community speaks non-standard English, then the members of that non-standard speaking community are also “lazy,” “ignorant,” “vulgar,” “sloppy”...

In short, in the eyes of many contemporary standard speakers, we *are* what we speak. In this respect, language is perhaps one of the last blatant, but largely unconscious, vestiges of the Great Chain of Being.

Yet despite the erosion of traditional social class boundaries based on birth and wealth, and in spite of the emergence since the Second World War of what Bud Khleif (1978) has called a new “knowledge” class, what I find striking is that educated speakers, often of working-class origin, have adopted the same elitist prescriptivist attitudes as the former ruling classes they have replaced.

We observe that this appropriation of the linguistic codes of socially prestigious members of society is certainly not new. In 18th-century England, this is revealed by the fact that Thomas Sheridan, as an Irishman, strived not only to teach his countrymen to avoid “Irishisms” but also to assist dialect-speaking Englishmen to erase traces of their own basilectal pronunciations.

James Buchanan, a Scot, was also viewed negatively by English critics (Kenrick in particular) mainly because he simply was not “English” and, therefore, was deemed ill-equipped to teach Englishmen to pronounce “their own language” correctly.

Ironically, however, all of these “provincial” orthoepists, regardless of their origins, acknowledged the supremacy of what might be called the English acrolect, spoken by the social and political elites in London. Paradoxically, by doing so, they tacitly legitimized the social power structure in place, at least from a sociolinguistic perspective. Yet, to repeat, Spence, although he was “English,” was a northerner and, as such, for this reason, his speech was also viewed with disdain. His ambition was designed not only to use his alphabet as a tool to advance the cause of working people but, in so doing, bring down the entire oppressive social and political structure of the time. We have seen previously and shall see in Parts IV and V, that Franklin’s positions were akin to these, unlike Webster who defended a New England English model which he considered older and thus “purer” and reflective of the 17th-century English “golden age.” In his mind, on the other hand, London English was a “dialect” that had already been corrupted by the “whims” of a small unrepresentative aristocracy (cf. Chapters 29-30). It is not impossible that, at an affective level, Franklin shared at least some of Webster’s sentiments following the Revolution.

2.2 Internal Colonialism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

Michael Hechtner (1975) proposed a controversial hypothesis about the non-English-speaking nations of the United Kingdom entitled *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* in which he argues that the people of Scotland, Wales and Ireland suffered the same fate as the other colonial populations of the British Empire: political and economic exploitation as well as the destruction of their national cultures and languages. If one accepts the basic premise of this hypothesis, and there are numerous ifs, I would venture to add northern England to this equation and other peripheral rural regions of England with strong regional cultural and linguistic identities. Indeed, some readers might prefer to simply include all the basilectal-speaking, working-class communities of Britain in this scheme.

As we have seen, the question of caste and class, or, perhaps more appropriately in the 21st century, *couches sociales* (“social layers”), is omnipresent at all levels of the discussions that have preceded and, once again, we are forced to reconsider the sociolinguistic and cultural effects of the “Great Chain of Being” model presented in Chapter 1 and again in Chapter 10 from a sociolinguistic perspective.

2.2.1 Social and Linguistic “Mimicry”

Andrea Sand (2000), quoting Edward K. Brathwaite’s *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820*, writes the following about what the latter calls the “mimicry” of the African slaves in Jamaica:

For... the curious and self-seeking, [there was] the imitation of the master. This imitation went on, naturally, most easily among those in closest and most intimate contact with the Europeans... It was one of the tragedies of slavery and of the conditions under which creolization had to take place, that it should have produced this kind of mimicry; should have produced such “mimic-men.” But in the circumstances, this was the only kind of “white” imitation that would have been accepted, given the terms in which the slaves were seen; and it was this kind of mimicry that was largely smiled upon and cultivated by the middle class. (Sand, 2000, 43)

While it might be considered inappropriate to compare the fate of the African slaves of Jamaica or America to the conditions of 17th- and 18th-century white working classes of Britain, Ireland and America, I would nevertheless submit that the difference is merely one of degree, the main distinction being that Africans were viewed as being further down the Chain of Being and, for that reason, were treated with less humanity. Having said this, during the first half of the 19th century, British mine owners did not refrain from sending five-year-

old children to the bottom of the pits where they served as “thrusters” or “corfs” (i.e. to push the coal carts) and “trappers” (to open doors for the coal carts or air vents) (Winstanley 1996). Nor should we forget the young orphans who were forced to serve as chimney sweeps, and who had an average lifespan of twelve to fifteen years.

The socioeconomic mechanisms that operated the economic system, however, and its effects in terms of self-image, were similar on the lower social strata of society.³ In what might be described as a form of collective “Stockholm syndrome,” those on the bottom rungs of the social ladder struggle(d) to acquire the respect of those having social and economic control over their lives and livelihoods. By imitating their behaviour, their modes of etiquette, their dress and their speech, the objective was and is to curry their favour and, in this way, gain acceptance in a higher social circle and, hopefully, improve their lives and those of their families.

The degree to which the stigma attached to basilects is reflected in the negative self-image of the speakers in social terms has been unreported. Shorrocks’ testimony for Bolton, Lancashire, is particularly poignant in this regard and could be transposed to describe speakers of stigmatized varieties of language around the globe:

A great many people in the area feel ashamed of their speech – to a degree that goes beyond what is generally appreciated. I have personally known those who would avoid, or could never enjoy, a conversation with a stranger, because they were literally too ashamed to open their mouths. It has been drummed into people – often at school, and certainly in society at large – that dialect speech is incorrect, impure, vulgar, clumsy, ugly, careless, shoddy, ignorant, and altogether inferior. Furthermore, the particularly close link in recent English society between speech, especially accent, and social class and values has made local dialect a hindrance to upward social mobility (Shorrocks, 1998, 90).

I have observed similar attitudes of social and linguistic inferiority, particularly among women, in several countries including western Brittany, Appalachia, Wales (regarding both vernacular Welsh English and non-standard Welsh) and urban and rural regions of England. In my research in Finistère, Brittany, for instance, I found that the inability to learn standard French or assimilate the behavioural codes of the dominant culture (particularly by persons born during the first half of the 20th century) led to terrible social isolation and loneliness. The psychological impact was often devastating with, for example, women shunning rural Breton-speaking men in their communities in favour of more

3 William Thomson, a Scottish abolitionist and militant defender of British working-class children, lived on plantations in all the states of the American South between 1841 and 1842 to observe the abusive working conditions there. He concluded that the conditions of “our British factory slaves” were often worse (cf. Thompson, 1976, 1999, 363-369; extracts from Thomson, 1842).

worldly urban dwellers. Perhaps the cruellest consequence of all was that monolingual Breton-speaking grandparents could no longer communicate with their grandchildren, now monolingual French-speakers, etc.⁴

One of the tragic realities was that members of the lower classes who were unable to or refused to acquire a proper level of the standard language were often mocked or even rejected by those who had achieved a level of fluency in the dominant register or idiom. One gets a sense of this in Spence's *The Giant Killer, or Anti-Landlord* (No. 1; August 6, 1814) in which he stresses the importance for poor people (i.e. his own people) to acquire a pronunciation which would be acceptable to speakers of the English acrolect (quoted in Beal, 1999, 9).

Why should People be laughed at all their lives for betraying their vulgar education, when the Evil is so easily remedied. How ridiculous it is to hear People that can read saying Any Think; A Horange; Idear; Noar. (my italics)

One can assume that people close to Spence (i.e. his family members and neighbours) pronounced these words in the very same way. And he probably did himself as a boy. Similarly, the Scot, Sylvester Douglas distinguishes between the basilectal speakers of Lowland Scots and the "polite" speakers of higher Scottish society:

the grosser barbarisms of the "vulgar Scotch jargon" and the language of his target readership, those "*whose language has already been in a great degree refined from the provincial dross, by frequenting English company, and studying the great masters of the English tongue in their writings*" (my italics). He aims to help these readers to rid themselves of "those vestigia ruris which are apt to remain so long." (Beal, 1999, 36, quoting Douglas, 1779, in C. Jones, 1991, 101)

Rather than defending and valorizing the varieties spoken by their respective countrymen,⁵ "the provincial dross," Douglas, Buchanan and Spence all changed tack and their goal was to "mimic," as best they could, the proto-RP speech of the gentle folk of London, i.e. "frequenting English company"... "studying the great masters of the English language." There almost appears to be a corollary here as well: English company = great masters of English! The goal then was to master a form of English that would be tolerable to them. As we shall see in Chapter

4 A psychologist working at the Gourmelen mental asylum in Quimper, now the EPSM, told me in 1978 that, in his estimation, a significant percentage of his patients (of rural origin), "perhaps as many as half," suffered in one way or another from ailments stemming from their having been forced (often by their native-Breton speaking parents) to speak "only French... for their own good." Given that their parents were often only semi-speakers of French, the consequence was that many of these people were unable to express themselves coherently in either language. The psychological trauma stemming from this, according to him, was overwhelming, ranging from low self-esteem to the inability to acquire fluency, literacy or any practical form of learning.

5 There are exceptions to this rule, however: Noah Webster for America, Robert Burns for Scotland, William Barnes for Dorset, Edwin Waugh for Lancashire, etc.

30, even after the Revolution, and in the same way as in England, Scotland and Wales, the majority of the American educated classes clung tenaciously to the proto-RP English model throughout the entire 19th century and even into the first quarter of the 20th century (cf. the “dictionary wars”).

Spence plainly considered the natural speech of his compatriots to be “ridiculous,” which is the very adjective used by both Franklin and Webster to describe the non-standard grammatical features of American English spoken by their own countrymen (see below). In this respect, the attitudes of Spence, Buchanan, Sheridan and Douglas resemble the subservient behaviour commonly observed in colonial settings by which the “colonized” reject their own culture and language, espousing those of their colonial masters.

Considering the phonetic spelling in his *Grand Repository* to be an essential tool to open educational opportunities for the advancement of the lower classes, Spence recognized and accepted the need to conform linguistically to the standard norm, and he had no problem with this. Only in this way could his radical plan for the reform of society be achieved. The two reforms – of spelling and socioeconomic justice – had always run parallel in Spence’s mind (Beal, 1999, 8) and this was precisely Franklin’s vision as well.

2.2.2 London English or Modified Standards?

Beal (1999, 63) cites Aitken (1979, 99) who considers that the aim of the anglicizing the Scots during the eighteenth century was to teach them a model of pronunciation identical to that of London which, for obvious reasons, could not be correctly “imitated.” In this context, Beal asks a highly pertinent question that is relevant to our story:

All “provincial” authors, including Spence, were subjected to the same criticisms in the eighteenth century (and later). The attitudes expressed in the quotations above suggest a “knee-jerk” reaction on the part of southern English critics which may seem to us typically eighteenth-century, typically Augustan, but, even with the hindsight of late-twentieth-century tolerance, the question has to be asked: *how could a person in the late eighteenth century who had spent all his or her life in, say, Newcastle or Glasgow or Dublin be conversant with the ‘correct’ pronunciation of English current amongst educated and refined Londoners?* (my italics)

Boston, New York and Philadelphia could have been added to the list of far-flung provincial towns at this time. When asked what qualifications a northerner like Spence might have to justify what “correct” pronunciation was, Spence simply replied that he had attended “All saints’ Church every Sunday morning.”

The serious point here is that Spence regarded the clergy in Newcastle as providing a model of correct pronunciation, a point which he made again in *The Giant Killer* (1814), where, in an article entitled “An infallible way to correct Provincialisms

and other Vulgarisms in Speech,” he exhorts his readers to “pay attention to the Clergy in the Pulpit, from whom they will have language which may be depended upon.” (Beal, 1999, 63)

Considering the relative lack of formal schooling, the clergy offered one of the main models of linguistic propriety for those without formal schooling. This reinforces the theoretical positions expressed in Chapters 10 and 11 regarding the construction of an ecclesiastical standard and its influences. According to Le Dù and Le Berre 2019, it was out of the ecclesiastical standard that the Breton secular standards ultimately evolved. I argued that a similar pattern was followed in medieval England. In the same way, what Beal states for northern England and Scotland was, I would argue, equally true in North America, but perhaps to a lesser degree for reasons explained in Chapters 10, 11 and 12, that is, American English was essentially composed of koines originating from a blending of largely southern English varieties of England.

Buchanan also saw the clergy as having an important role in the dissemination of his unifying national standard. “With respect to the inhabitants of North Britain . . . let gentlemen at the bar, and those that minister in holy things, be especially exemplary . . . and let both clergy and laity enjoin the schoolmasters over that part of the United Kingdom, to acquire and teach a proper Pronunciation to the rising generation. (Buchanan, 1766, cited in Crowley, 1991, 79; Beal, 1999, 64)

Citing Charles Jones (1991), Beal goes on to argue that the Church and the Bar may already have constituted a kind of regional or “modified” standard, not necessarily identical with the usage of London as described by, for example, Walker (1791), but nonetheless acceptable in polite society within Scotland, and distinct from the “vulgar” Lowland Scottish usage referred to above. We have seen that these two “institutions” are precisely the ones Gendron identified as having been the source of the mesolectal model for 17th- and 18th-century Québécois French speakers (cf. Chapter 11) and which I identified for colonial America, especially in New England.

Beal concludes by positing the existence of “modified standards” as early as the 18th century. If so, it may be that Beal’s “modified standard” could be a later, adapted and more polished version of the regional ecclesiastical models which, I hypothesized (cf. Chapter 10), developed during the 14th century at the popular level as part of an effort by the clergy to bridge the gap between the local basilects and the ecclesiastical mesolect.

... “Modified” standards may well have existed in the eighteenth century, and that what counted as “refined” and “correct” or, to use Spence’s words, “the most agreeable” pronunciation in Edinburgh or Newcastle, may have been different from the “proto-RP” developing in the capital and described (or rather prescribed) by Walker. We shall see... that such differences may shed light on the geographical diffusion of sound changes in the eighteenth century, and that to dismiss the works

of “provincial” orthoepists would be to ignore potentially valuable information.
(Beal, 1999, 64)

This is precisely the kind of gap I have found between Franklin’s London-based RMS and the New England pronunciation that is abundantly revealed in his own poetry and that of his fellow New Englanders.

One of the major conclusions of Part III is that the New England “modified standard” spoken by naturally Franklin and his compatriots appears to have been far more conservative than the model being advocated in London by Kenrick, Nares and Walker. Put another way, Franklin was only moderately successful in reproducing this proto-RP English and numerous New Englandisms inadvertently slip unto his transcriptions (cf. Chapters 25 through 28).

This raises another question, namely, was the English accent of the American colonials viewed with the same condescension that was reserved for the northern English, Lowland Scottish or Irish accents? As we have seen, although Sheridan, Buchanan and Spence are criticized and even lampooned by their English critics, I have not come across any similar offensive remarks about Franklin’s pronunciation or any other 18th-century American. For instance, the idea of Sheridan writing an English pronouncing dictionary is ridiculed by Samuel Johnson who writes, “He has, in the first place, the disadvantage of being an Irishman” (cited in Bowen, 1905, 545). This was not an isolated attitude at the time. It is likely, however, given the evidence provided by the data accumulated in Part III, that Franklin’s English was viewed by Englishmen, not so much as an “American,” but rather as an old-fashioned, southern English provincial variety (cf. Chapters 6-9), which is indeed the way Franklin appears to have seen his own English. We shall return to this point in Chapter 25.

Most of the criticism regarding American English that I have uncovered during this period concerns neologisms, in particular, the use of denominal verbs. In a letter to Franklin, David Hume criticized Franklin’s use of three denominal verbs. Interestingly, Hume presumably spoke a form of “modified standard Scots” characteristic of 18th-century Edinburgh. It is perhaps ironic that accents do not appear to be the focus of the discussion between the two men. In his response to Hume (Franklin to David Hume, September 27, 1760), Franklin meekly acquiesced acknowledging that these innovations were “bad” (elsewhere Franklin refers to them as “barbarisms,” Chapter 30) adding that “we shall always in America make the best English of this Island our standard, and I believe it will be so” (ibid.).

3. Franklin's Prescriptive Vision of English

3.1 "Modified" Standards and Ecclesiastical Standards

As mentioned above, in Chapters 1, 10 and 11, I proposed the hypothesis that an ecclesiastical standard gradually arose in medieval England following the translation of the catechism and Wycliffe's Bible during the 14th century. This was followed by successive English Bible translations of the 16th and 17th centuries, which had the effect of progressively refining the ecclesiastical standard and thus providing a sense of grammatical order and a dignity to the language that had not existed previously (cf. Dobson's remark that John Wallis' contemporaries believed that English was "incapable of reduction to the rules of grammar" (Dobson, 1968, 223) on account of the fact that it was composed of a chaotic mass of basilects). As a consequence of the foundation of a refined ecclesiastical standard, the culmination of which was the 1611 King James Bible, the grammatical rules had been set for the secular standard which developed alongside it throughout the Early Modern Period.

It is a variety of this ecclesiastical standard that Franklin heard every Sunday at the Old South Church in Boston (where he was baptized) (founded in 1670). This standard, judged by all to be a respectful medium to communicate with God himself, had a powerful impact on the minds of the members of the congregation in a way that is difficult to fathom today (cf. Chapter 4). We have seen that the best educated members of the community strived to master this register which they used within the home in their daily prayers, readings of scripture and hymns as well as the religious meetings and reunions of the kind Franklin attended as a child and as young adult. Recall also that many of the New England ministers had been university-trained back in England (Fischer, 1989, 19). In terms of rhetoric, pronunciation and grammar, the linguistic model of the New England clergy was essentially the same as that of a similar class of clergyman back in eastern and southern England. Proof of this was seen in the story of Rev. John Allin, the pastor of Dedham from 1637 to 1671. This helps explain the steady drift towards an oral English mesolectal idiom. We have seen that it is probably this kind of standardized variety that struck 18th-century English travellers.

We have already mentioned on multiple occasions that Franklin was greatly influenced by the rhetoric of the Boston clergy and, as a child, attended the sermons of the famous Reverend Cotton Mather whose book, *Bonfacious Essays to Do Good*, had inspired him to commit himself to a life-long engagement to advance social causes.

We have seen that, despite his rejection of organized religion, Franklin was always eager to assist Christian ministers who promoted practical good works.

In Chapter 4, we saw that he believed the best way to please Providence was to do good for one's fellow man. We saw that Franklin was most particularly impressed by Reverend Whitefield, a brilliant itinerant preacher from Gloucester, England, who arrived in the colonies in 1739. His enormous religious and political impact on the colonies was discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Franklin was absolutely awestruck by his galvanizing sermons and Whitefield is widely credited by historians as having launched the First Great Awakening the consequence of which was to draw Christians away from both the Congregationalist Churches (dissident) of New England but also Anglicans from the Church of England. This, we have seen, was largely to the benefit of Baptists and Methodists. Thanks to his rhetorical skills, his booming voice and articulate delivery, and, most especially, the power of his message, Rev. Whitefield pushed individual Christians to perform positive actions for the "commonwealth" and the poor (including Africans).

These skills totally mesmerized Franklin (cf. Chapter 4) and, at the heart of Whitefield's enormous success was his revolutionary social message, which echoed many of the same egalitarian themes promoted by John Ball during the 14th century.

The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the *extraordinary influence of his oratory* (my italics) on his hearers, and how much they admir'd and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them, by assuring them that they were naturally *half beasts and half devils*. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seem'd as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk thro' the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street. (BF, pp. 104-105)

Franklin was also amazed by the huge numbers of people who came to listen to his sermons and he actually took the trouble to calculate how many people Whitefield could actually address (up to 30,000 at a time, BF, p. 108). This is another example of what might be called the "Franklin method":

He had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his words and sentences so perfectly, that he might be heard and understood at a great distance, especially as his auditories, however numerous, observ'd the most exact silence. (my italics) (ibid.)

Although he must have considered the printing of Whitefield's sermons in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* to be a solid financial investment, there can be no doubt that Franklin truly believed in Whitefield's capacity to promote positive social change. By publishing his sermons, the most widely read paper in the colonies, Franklin played an enormous role in not only building Reverend Whitefield's reputation but also in creating the incendiary climate which was soon to

envelope the colonies. Here is yet another way in which Franklin played an enormous role in future events.

Clarity of speech and articulation are put forward here. In another burst of admiration for Whitefield's eloquence, Franklin explains that one of the reasons for this was the fact that he was an itinerant preacher and thus repeated the same sermon on multiple occasions and, for this reason, knew them by heart.

His delivery of the latter was so improv'd by frequent repetitions *that every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice, was so perfectly well turn'd and well plac'd, that, without being interested in the subject, one could not help being pleas'd with the discourse; a pleasure of much the same kind with that receiv'd from an excellent piece of musick* (my italics). (Ibid.)

Out of jealousy for his success, but also because he blatantly condemned the traditional approaches towards religion, the Congregationalist clergy (of Puritan inspiration) "took an immediate disliking" to Whitefield and refused to allow him to preach in their churches. Franklin, who had little respect for the latter, took advantage of this situation to encourage the construction of a common meeting house which would be open to the ministers of all faiths (cf. Chapter 4). This same building would later become part of the University of Philadelphia (for more discussion regarding the following citation, cf. Chapter 4, section 5.1).

And it being found inconvenient to assemble in the open air, subject to its inclemencies, the building of a house to meet in was no sooner propos'd, and persons appointed to receive contributions, but sufficient sums were soon receiv'd to procure the ground and erect the building, which was one hundred feet long and seventy broad, about the size of Westminster Hall; and the work was carried on with such spirit as to be finished in a much shorter time than could have been expected. Both house and ground were vested in trustees, expressly for the use of any preacher of any religious persuasion who might desire to say something to the people at Philadelphia; the design in building not being to accommodate any particular sect, but the inhabitants in general; so that even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service. (BE, p. 105)

The last phrase is often cited as proof of Franklin's openness to non-Christian religions (cf. Chapter 4). This may be true but, nevertheless, from a semantic perspective, the phrase is what some linguists call a "scalar conditional," in other words, signalling what might be considered a "worse-case scenario." From a contemporary cultural perspective, "*even if* the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary" implies that the Mufti of Constantinople was the archetypal enemy of Christendom. We are not far from, "Even if the devil himself sent a missionary, he would find a pulpit at his service." I see this comment to be another slap, if not a punch, in the face of his Presbyterian kinsmen.

3.2 Franklin's Condemnation of the Non-Standard American Vernacular

One of the clearest indications of Franklin's condemnation of "vulgar" English is to be found in an issue of *Poor Richard's Almanack* (December, 1739) in which he identifies and criticizes the non-standard pronunciation and grammar that he associated with the different colonies. In the previous chapters of Part II, I have made several allusions to Franklin's identification of stereotypical paritary pronunciations and expressions that he associated with the different colonies. Because of the importance of this short passage, I shall quote it in full below.

I find it interesting that his observations seem to temper the testimonies of contemporary English travellers discussed in Chapter 11 who, almost to a man, were surprised by the unity, "purity" and standard nature of American English of that day. I have already explained that these British guests were probably thinking in comparative terms, that is, of the broad British basilects that were spoken by the mass of the population in their native shires back in Britain (cf. Chapters 10 and 11). Their insistence on the quality and "purity" of American English must thus be viewed with a more critical eye. In general terms, however, they were most certainly correct, but their impression was the result of considerable dialect levelling *vers le haut* that had occurred in the colonies in both British America and French Québec.

Mercury will have his share in these affairs,⁶ and so confound the speech of the people, that when a Pennsylvanian would say "panther" he shall say "painter." When a New Yorker thinks to say "this" he shall say "diss," and the people of New England and Cape May (i.e. New Jersey) will not be able to say "cow" for their lives, but will be forced to say "keow" by a certain involuntary twist in the root of their tongues. (i.e. palatalization!). No Connecticut man nor Marylander will be able to open his mouth this year but *sir* shall be the first or last syllable he pronounces, and sometimes both.— Brutes shall speak in many places, and there will be about *seven and twenty irregular verbs* made this year, if Grammar *don't* interpose.— Who can help these misfortunes?⁷ (Franklin, 1739)

The abovementioned passage provides us with precious evidence that Franklin himself recognized that several different regional paritary koines (Chapter 10) had already developed in North America by the time he wrote this passage in 1739. As meagre as the details are, this one paragraph offers an invaluable

6 This is reminiscent of Caxton's famous description of linguistic variation in Middle English: "For we englysshe men / *ben borne vnder the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is neuer stedfaste* / but euer wauerynge / wexyng one season / and waneth & dyscreaseth another season / And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother" (cf. his translation of *Eneydos*, Chapter 10).

7 Recorded in *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Poetry for December 1739 (Volume 2 of Franklin's letters 1735-1755).

glimpse into the American vernacular English as it was spoken in 1739. These are specific examples of what Franklin considered to be identifying features of each colony. As I proposed in Chapter 12, this suggests that multiple paritary koines, corresponding to each of the colonies, had arisen during the first hundred years of settlement, not just one. To repeat, these shibboleths are still associated with the same regions today which is of enormous significance to our study given that it implies the continuity in the phonological, grammatical and lexical features of non-standard, rural, American English today, including AAVE.

For instance, the fact that Pennsylvanians were known to pronounce “panther” as *painter* [ˈpeɪntə-] is particularly interesting in that the diphthongization of <a> before [n] > [ɛɪn] in such contexts is still a common feature associated with Appalachian and southern US English more generally. Modern examples of this feature are *can’t* [kɛɪnt], *ha’nt* or *a’nt* > [heɪnt] and [ɛɪnt], and so on. Quoting Sevier’s *Painter Springs, Panther Springs* (1796, V, 85), Hall (1942) also gives the pronunciation of *painter* for “panther.” As we shall see in Part III (see also Chapter 15), a large number of Pennsylvanians and Delawareans migrated southward through the southern Appalachians into areas of Kentucky and Tennessee and, what started as part of the late 17th- and early 18th-century feature pool of Pennsylvania must have spread southwards by speakers from this region (cf. Chapter 2; Hall, 1942, chapter 7). We also saw that Franklin mentioned 10,000 Pennsylvania families moving into North Carolina (Bailyn, 1986a, 15). This reinforces the hypothesis that southern Appalachian English has at least partial roots in the Pennsylvania and Delaware koine(s).

Another pronunciation noted by Franklin, which he associates with New York, is [dɪs] for “this,” which is still a stereotypical pronunciation associated with working-class New Yorkers today (along with r-lessness). Indeed, Hollywood films of the 1940s and 1950s often featured street-smart New Yorkers whose stigmatized speech would include this feature (“*dis, dat, dem* and *dose*”). As a child during the 1960s, I recall Massachusettsans teasing New Yorkers by asking them to pronounce “thirty-third street” expecting to hear them respond [ˈtɔɪdi ˈtɔɪd]! Franklin’s evidence proves that [ð] > [d]/[θ] > [t] was already characteristic of vernacular New York speech as early as 1739! Some modern linguists have cited Irish influence as the source but this cannot possibly be the case here given that Irish Catholics did not arrive in great numbers to New York until after the great “famine” of the 1840s.

Considering that New York was originally Dutch, one obvious possibility is that this feature results from a substratal influence by early Dutch settlers. Nevertheless, it is not to be ruled out that it may have been part of the feature pool of 17th century settlers from the rural southern England where [d] + [r] in place of [θ] was common in a number of words such as *drough* for “through,” *drush* for “thrush,” etc. (Somerset, etc. SED).

Franklin gives *keow* for “cow” ([kj- ~ kɛ-] + V) as another non-standard example which he attributes to both New England and New Jersey. Interestingly, his reference to the “root of the tongue” (“a certain involuntary twist in the root of their tongues”) would imply that the vowel of <ke-> was in fact palatal [j] but this may be contradicted by other contemporary evidence (Walker, 1791) suggesting that it really was pronounced as [kɛ-] (cf. Chapters 23 and 27).

Grandgent (1899, 228) and Krapp (1925, 207-208) confirm that [kj] and [gj] were well attested pronunciations in not only New England but throughout the colonies. This is also confirmed by Hall (1942, 46) in Tennessee who states that the “consonant type [kj] is not at all rare.” He gives examples like *cow* [kjæu], *county* [kjæunti], *scouts* [skjæuts]. There can be no doubt that this was also originally part of the feature pool of all the 17th-century colonies (cf. Chapter 11 for more discussion, cf. Chapter 23). Variant pronunciations of these examples will be presented in Part III.

Note that Wallis gave examples of *cyan*, *gyet*, *begyin*, which he claims “only occurs in the speech of Midlanders” (Dobson, 1968, 234). This is interesting in that, if true, it would indeed support the idea that this feature comes in under the influence of Englishmen from the Midlands, even in Appalachia (along with a-prefixing, another uniquely southern English feature).

It is interesting to note that Walker (1791, 12) actually advocates its use saying that “When a preceded by gutturals, hard g or c, it is, in polite pronunciation, softened by the intervention of a sound like e, so that *card*, *cart*, *guard*, *regard*, are pronounced like *ke-ard*, *ke-art*, *ghe-ard*, *re-gh-eard*.” Citing its use in Steele’s *Grammar* (p. 49), Walker favours its retention saying that this “proves it is not the offspring of the present day.”

Franklin’s mention of the excessive use of “sir” in this passage must refer to the title “Sir,” which was very frequently used as a sign of respect by men and women when addressing (normally older) male authority figures. It must have struck Franklin as too obsequious. Today, this is still very common in the American South and, of course, in military circles.⁸

Franklin’s scornful/joking, remark, “there will be about seven and twenty irregular verbs made this year, if Grammar *don’t* interpose,” concerns the use, by “brutes” of non-standard verbal morphonology. Nevertheless, his teasing use of *don’t* here, instead of *doesn’t*, is another feature which has been present since colonial times (as in, “He don’t never come here no more”). This use of

8 This is based on my own experience. As an adolescent, my family moved from southeastern Massachusetts to Virginia in 1968. At the time, I was struck by the politeness of the native Virginians and my first impression was that ‘sir’ was indeed overused by them. By comparison, I had the impression that the Massachusettsans tended to be rather curt and abrupt in their dealings with others. “Ma’am” was also used with equal frequency in Virginia. An old-fashioned pronunciation of *ma’am* was common at the time whereby it was reduced to syllabic [m] in the more rural areas in affirmative contexts: [jesm] for “Yes Ma’am.”

don't is thought to have its source in East Anglia where the third person singular morpheme <eth> [θ] was elided, and not replaced by northern <-s>, hence, “*He/She cometh, looketh, goeth, doth* > *He/She come, look, go, do*. It is not unlikely that this phenomenon, which was relatively common in East Anglia until recently, may help explain the existence of the same feature in AAVE. *He/she/it don't* stems from *doth not* > *do(th)n't* > [dɒnt].⁹

Franklin's early 18th-century testimony shows that not only were non-standard American varieties already established regionally but they were already identifiable to speakers from other colonies, both North and South. This directly supports my hypothesis regarding the existence of a paritary koine which developed parallelly to that of the disparitary, mesolectal koine (cf. Chapter 12). Finally, and more importantly, with the exception of *keow*, most of the features he describes here are still identifiable (or were still until a few years ago) as being typical of the regions he identifies.

In this respect, Looby (1884, 15) is thus absolutely correct in asserting that “Franklin shows himself to have been an acute observer of American speech. *The incipient regional accents he notices seem quite familiar today*” (my italics). Here Looby inadvertently confirms the continuity of paritary non-standard colonial registers from colonial times to the present day.

Franklin's condescension for these paritary American registers show the degree to which Franklin considered any deviation from the secular and ecclesiastical standard models of England to be a grievous transgression of linguistic etiquette. In short, Franklin, like Webster and the Abbé Grégoire in France, was a devout prescriptivist.

Looby (1984, 14), however, interprets the passage above as meaning that “uniformity of speech was, in fact, deteriorating in Franklin's time... This deterioration was not lost on Franklin's ears.” The reasons for this “deterioration,” Looby believed, were due to the increase in migration and widening distance between the rich and poor. Like Dillard (1972, 1973, 1992), Looby makes the erroneous assumption that the English spoken in the colonies was originally uniform (cf. Chapters 11 and 12 for contextualization). Mufwene (2015, 89) stressed the need to know more about the basilectal varieties of English that served as contact varieties during the initial stages of colonisation. He too complained that many scholars in the past have naively assumed that English was quite unified and standardized. Did Dillard and, especially Looby, think that “English”

9 I noted an exchange between two neighbours in north-western Virginia about forty years ago which is edifying with regard to irregular verbs. When a man complained to his friend that he had not responded to his greeting as he was driving past his house, the answer was: “Oh, I *seen* ya, but when I *retched* up and *wove* ya'd already *went*.” These are precisely the kinds of irregular verbal forms referred to by Franklin in 1739 and represents yet another example continuity between the 18th- and 20th-century paritary varieties of English. Both men were in their sixties at the time.

of the 17th- and 18th-century settlers was truly a uniform variety? Looby's remark that colonial English was "deteriorating" during Franklin's lifetime, presumably as a result of contacts with non-English speaking populations is, as I have explained previously, untenable both sociolinguistically and in chronological terms. Furthermore, as we have seen, the founder generations of Massachusetts and Virginia had already laid the groundwork for the formation of their respective koines in the early 17th century. By 1700, the koineization process was more or less complete and, as we have seen above, recognizable koines had already emerged in each of the colonies. Here we have had a rare glimpse of the paritary, non-standard registers of these colonies. Another related problem with Looby's assessment is his implicit assumption that basilectal English varieties were to be equated with linguistic degeneration and decline.

3.3 Drawling

A feature often associated with southern US English today is "drawling." However, it was apparently a feature shared throughout the colonies and presumably finds its origins in England. In a letter to his brother Peter, Franklin defines "drawling" as "extending the sound of words or syllables beyond their natural length" (Franklin to Peter F., "before 1765"). Although he is referring to the way lyrics can be incorrectly adapted to music, the point is interesting because this characteristic was also associated with New England speech.

In the Chapter 16 and 18 of Volume II, we shall examine some traces of New England traces of "drawling" which I believe may have led to "breaking" (the two often being confused) in the 17th-century New England and New York town records as well as in England. Webster, in his earliest work, *Grammatical Institute* (1783, 3) also writes that "in New England, we hear a flat, drawling pronunciation" which Krapp claims is the earliest reference to the phenomenon (Krapp, 1925, 13). Once again, the point regarding "drawling" reinforces Krapp's contention that many non-standard traits now associated with southern American English were once shared more broadly throughout the colonies which, again, suggests that these were also common characteristics of "vulgar" English in 17th- and 18th-century New England and England itself. Mazarin cites one of the first recorded examples of vowel lengthening, which he too describes as a vulgarism at the time, by the French grammarian Bellot in 1586 (Mazarin 2020, see Part III for discussion).

Because of the higher levels of education in northeastern US during the 19th and early 20th centuries, non-standard features of this kind were progressively eliminated far more quickly than in the South which, in matters of formal education, has always lagged behind since the earliest settlement period (cf. Chapter 1).

To close this discussion, in a letter dating to 1789, Franklin reminisces about his native Boston and expresses his longing to return to his hometown one last time before dying.

I should find very few indeed of my old friends living, it being now sixty-five years since I left it to settle here; —all this considered, I say, it seems probable, though not certain, that I shall hardly again visit that beloved place. But I enjoy the company and conversation of its inhabitants, when any of them are so good as to visit me; for, besides their general good-sense, which I value, *the Boston manner, turn of phrase, and even tone of voice, and accent in pronunciation*, all please, and seem to refresh and revive me. (Franklin to John Lathrop, May 31, 1788)

This passage confirms that, in the minds of Franklin and his contemporaries, not only did New England, and Boston itself, possess a clearly identifiable and common mode of speech at that time (i.e. a koine), but that, more generally, such a thing as a Boston accent and mode of speech with specific turns of phrase (grammar and idiom), were already in place by the time of Franklin's birth in 1706. By extension, one can assume that regional pronunciations and non-standard paritary koines of American English were also well-established by this time (cf. Chapters 11 and 12). The fondness Franklin expresses here for his own Bostonian speech suggests that, at this late date, he still felt a strong attachment to Boston English

3.4 Franklin on Education and the Value of “Good English”

We have now seen the degree to which Franklin detested certain features of language which he considered to be “ridiculous” or “barbarisms.” In his third and final letter to Webster, he goes into even more detail giving examples of the misuse of certain words in America that had appeared after his departure from Boston in 1723. Now we shall turn to some of his linguistic ideals (cf. Chapters 29 and 30 for a more detailed discussion).

Another of Franklin's unheralded contributions to language studies is, very specifically, his effort to teach the English language as an academic subject. As surprising as this may seem today, during the 18th century, English grammar and pronunciation were not required subjects of study in schools and its study as an official academic subject was fiercely resisted by traditionalists who believed only Latin and Greek deserved to be taught formally.

This objective was foremost in his mind when he forcefully argued for the creation of what he called an “English school” of his Philadelphia Academy of which he was a founder (cf. Chapter 5) (Franklin to Founders of the Academy, June 1789, cf. Andresen, 1990, 49). By this, he meant that the attending students should be expected to dedicate a portion of their curriculum to mastery their own language in addition to but not to the exclusion of Latin and Greek.

In a footnote in Franklin's long document addressed to the trustees of the Philadelphia Academy, entitled "Observations relative to the intentions of the original funders of the Academy in Philadelphia," June 1789, he quotes John Locke who also argued in favour of proper schooling in English grammar:

He ought to study grammar, among the other helps of speaking well; *but it must be the grammar of his own tongue, of the language he uses, that he may understand his own country speech nicely, and speak it properly, without shocking the ears of those it is addressed to with solecisms and offensive irregularities.* And to this purpose grammar is necessary; but it is the grammar only of their own proper tongues, and to those who would take pains in cultivating their language and perfecting their styles. Whether all gentlemen should not do this, I leave to be considered, *since the want of propriety and grammatical exactness is thought very misbecoming one of that rank, and usually draws on one guilty of such faults the imputation of having had a lower breeding and worse company than suit with his quality.* If this be so (as I suppose it is), it will be matter of wonder why young gentlemen are forced to learn the grammars of foreign and dead languages, and are never once told of the grammar of their own tongues. (my italics) (John Locke quoted by Franklin, June 1789)

Once again, we see how Locke, despite his enlightened thinking, still associated the lack of "propriety and grammatical exactness" with the lower "ranks" of humanity and with "lower breeding" and "worse company," another testimony to the persistence of the sociolinguistic counterpart of the Great Chain of Being...

In the preceding section, we saw some clear evidence of Franklin's prescriptive attitudes towards language and his disregard for dialectal pronunciations. In this, he is no different from the intellectuals of his day. In his writings, Franklin placed enormous stock in the value of standard English grammar and a clear pronunciation, but he rarely offers us any specific idea of what that correct pronunciation should be. The only place we can obtain a detailed picture of his idealized model for pronunciation is in his own 1768 spelling reform (Chapters 25-28).

In his "Sketch of an English School" (Vol. 7 of his correspondence) which he had addressed "for the consideration of the trustees of the Philadelphia Academy" in 1778, he prepared a list of arguments and proposals that he considered essential to a proper education. Frustrated that his proposals had not been acted upon previously, he addressed another letter, written in June 1789, less than a year before his death, to this same body of trustees. Here again, Franklin reveals his prescriptive vision of "good" English pronunciation by emphasizing the necessity of formal instruction of English as a central part of a good education. Here he reproaches them for not having respected the original constitution which he had originally proposed.

The words of the constitution are: "The rector shall be obliged, without the assistance of any usher, to teach twenty scholars the Latin and Greek languages, and the *English tongue*." To enable him to do this, we have seen that some of his

qualifications, indispensably required, were, *his polite speaking, writing, and understanding the English tongue*. Having these, he was enjoined, on all occasions consistent with his other duties, *to assist the English master in improving the boys under his care; but there is not a word obliging the English master to teach the Latin boys English*. (my italics) (Franklin, 1789)

He emphasizes “good” English pronunciation and that the teaching of English should be a central part of a good education and that it was being neglected. First, he reminds them that his endeavours to guarantee that a student master his native language was directly linked to his foundation of public lending libraries (cf. Chapter 3).

Having acquired some little reputation among my fellow-citizens, by projecting the public library in 1732... and by proposing and promoting, with success, sundry other schemes of utility in 1749, I was encouraged to hazard another project, that of a public education for our youth. As in the scheme of the library I had provided only for English books, so in this new scheme my ideas went no further than to procure the means of *a good English education* (my italics) ... to be taught *speaking properly and gracefully, which is near akin to good reading*, and naturally follows it in the studies of youth. Let the scholars of this class begin with learning the elements of rhetoric from some short system, so as to be able to give an account of the most useful tropes and figures. Let *all their bad habits of speaking, all offences against good grammar, all corrupt or foreign accents, and all improper phrases*, be pointed out to them. (my italics) (ibid.)

In Franklin’s year by year review of the minutes, he angrily points out to the trustees that the original conditions of the Philadelphia Academy had not been respected and stresses that the goal of teaching the young “scholars” should be to have them master “the elegance of the English language,” and give them “a proper pronunciation;” and *that the old method of hearing them read and repeat in public should be used again* (we shall return to this in Chapter 27):

These constitutions are upon record in your minutes; and, although the Latin and Greek are by them to be taught, *the original idea of a complete English education was not forgotten, as will appear by the following extracts*.

Page 1. “The English tongue is to be taught grammatically, and as a language.”

Page 4. In reciting the qualification of the person to be appointed rector, it is said, “that great regard is to be had to *his polite speaking, writing, and understanding the English tongue*.” (my italics) (ibid.)

Further on, Franklin writes that the teacher who was hired to teach English was named Mr. David James Dove who had sixteen years of experience teaching grammar in a school in Chichester back in Sussex, England. Franklin writes that:

He [Dove] had a good voice, read perfectly well, *with proper accent and just pronunciation* (my italics) and his method of communicating habits of the same

kind to his pupils was this: When he gave a lesson to one of them, *he always first read it to him aloud, with all the different modulations of voice that the subject and sense required* (my italics). These the scholars, in study and repeating the lesson, naturally endeavored to imitate; and it was really surprising to see how soon they caught his manner, which convinced me and others who frequently attended his school that *though bad tones and manners in reading* are, when once acquired, rarely, with difficulty, if ever cured, yet, when none have been already formed, *good ones are as easily learned as bad.* (my italics) (ibid.)

The stress he places on having the boys “read aloud with all the modulations of voice that the subject and sense required” and his argument “that every scholar to be admitted into this school be at least able to *pronounce and divide the syllables in reading and write a legible hand*” offer keys to understanding the fundamental principles on which his RMS was based. I ask the reader to keep this in mind because I shall return to these provisions made for his “English school” on several occasions in Chapters 25-27 where I argue that his mode of transcription was also designed to assist students to read. In other words, he must have imagined that his proto-phonemic spelling reform would have enabled the students to read each word syllabically, thus allowing them to acquire precise and accurate diction on the model of cultivated London English. This would explain why Franklin’s own transcriptions often show fully stressed vowels in unstressed syllables (for his use of <u> in unstressed syllables, cf. Chapter 27).

3.5 Moving towards an English Acrolect?

We saw in Chapter 1 that the 1611 King James Bible had superseded all others by the middle of the 18th century and was considered by all to be a reference of literary elegance. Yet, as the temporal and spiritual worlds split more and more throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, this ecclesiastical model was to remain functionally confined to liturgical matters until very recently and, with modern translations of the Bible in contemporary English, except for the oldest Christians, the King James Bible is increasingly a relic. We have already seen that Franklin already thought this was the case in his day and proposed a modern translation of it (cf. Franklin, 1782b).

Linguists generally date the beginning of Modern English period to this period which also corresponds to the publication of Dr. Samuel Johnson’s monumental *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755, the dictionary which first codified the vocabulary considered to be most appropriate for an educated person at that time.

One of the consequences of the rapidly growing merchant class was the need for pronunciation dictionaries to instruct speakers of this class about the standards of use of “proper” pronunciation. Beal (1999, 23), quoting Benzie (1972), tells us that “five times as many works on elocution appeared

between 1760 and 1800” than had been published in the years prior to 1760. The social class to which Franklin belonged was directly concerned by this new consciousness of linguistic propriety.

Many late eighteenth century authors acknowledge this, advertising their work as suitable for those engaged in “business” or “trade.” Withers writes that “the importance of a correct Mode of Expression in Business is sufficiently obvious” and recommends his work to “Shopmen, Clerks and all who are engaged in the Transactions of commercial Life” (1788, 31), noting on the same page that Britain is “a Country where the Industrious may become affluent, and the Affluent ascend to the chief Employments of the State.” It was precisely the newly affluent, now able to “ascend to the chief employments of the state,” who both felt the need for and could afford the elocution lessons and printed guides which were to proliferate in the last few decades of the eighteenth century. (Beal, 2010, 23).

Although the orthoepists frequently disagreed among themselves as to precise “rules” of pronunciation, slowly but surely, a consensus was being reached, and the system of pronunciation became increasingly “fixed” as time progressed.

In an interesting lecture delivered by Edwin Bowen in 1905, entitled “Authority in English Pronunciation,” he writes that when Dr. Johnson was informed of Sheridan’s plan of producing an English dictionary designed to indicate the proper pronunciation of each word, Johnson ridiculed it in the following way:

Besides, Sir, what entitles Sheridan to fix the pronunciation of English? *He has, in the first place, the disadvantage of being an Irishman*; and if he says he will fix it after the example of the best company, why they differ among themselves. I remember an instance: when I published the plan of my dictionary, Lord Chesterfield told me that the word *great* should be pronounced to rhyme to *state*; and Sir William Yonge sent me word that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *seat*, and that none but Irishmen would pronounce it *grait*. Now, here were two men of the highest rank, the one the best speaker in the House of Lords, the other the best speaker in the House of Commons, differing entirely. (Bowen, 1905, 545)

These remarks by Dr. Johnson furnish us with eloquent testimony of the reality of 18th-century English pronunciation even among “polite” speakers of his day. It also suggests how much variation truly existed even among the mesolectal speakers, reminding us once again that the barrier between accent and grammar must never be confused.

We shall see in the next chapters, for instance, that Sir Isaac Newton, while a student at Cambridge in the early 1660s, had advocated the pronunciation of [x], as in modern Scots, in words like *thought* and *rough*! Newton was scheduled to meet Franklin in 1725 at Batson’s Coffee-house and, had they met, Franklin would certainly have heard Newton pronounce such words in the old manner. This probably would not have phased him in the slightest given that older speakers on both sides of the Atlantic shared this pronunciation. Indeed,

Polly Stevenson, in her letter outlining the disadvantages of Franklin's new orthography, also questions whether a standard pronunciation could be "fixed," using the same term as Johnson does above to express her incredulity. Perhaps as an Englishwoman, she was more sensitive to the degree of dialect diversity that still existed in England.

In an important way, and despite the hurdles of variable pronunciations the 18th-century orthoepists had to overcome, their pronouncing dictionaries (in particular those of Sheridan and Walker's) created the benchmark to which all educated English speakers were expected to conform. The accent that was advocated was that which was associated with the English court, but also the English stage (both Sheridan and Walker were trained actors), as well as the best educated members of London's high society. Those who succeeded in mastering the new rules of this proto-RP pronunciation were thus automatically viewed as belonging to the upper crust. Nevertheless, as we shall see in Part III, their models of pronunciation were characterized by numerous innovations (diachronically-speaking) and, in this respect, the new model was seen by many speakers in the outlying regions, including America, as a departure from earlier models which many speakers preferred. This is patently obvious in the case of Noah Webster.

Beal's observation about the multiplication of pronunciation dictionaries is comforted by Edwin Bowen who highlights that the demand for these 18th-century pronouncing dictionaries was simulated by the enormous feelings of linguistic insecurity among members of the rising English middle class. The speech of many of these was only a step away from the regional basilects, and these dictionaries gave them confidence in their dealings with their social superiors. One wonders to what degree Franklin may have felt a similar sense of lack of confidence. There is evidence that he did suffer from linguistic insecurity.

The pronouncing dictionary, therefore, is a modern production; it was hardly known before the first quarter of the eighteenth century. It is held by some scholars, notably Professor Lounsbury in his "Standard of Pronunciation in English," that the pronouncing dictionary was called into existence by the desire on the part of the imperfectly educated middle class to know what to say and how to say it. This desire became stronger and stronger as the members of that growing class of England's population rose by degrees into social prominence. Possessing little culture and few social advantages, and lacking confidence in their meager training, such people were not willing to exercise the right of private judgment, and consequently they sought out an authority and guide. They were eager to learn the modes of speech which obtained in the most highly cultured circles, the *jus et norma loquendi* of the nobility. It was natural therefore, since the occasion appeared to demand it, that self-appointed guides should come forward and offer to conduct the multitudes of social pariahs through the wilderness of orthoepical embarrassment into the Canaan of polite usage. Such was probably the origin of the pronouncing dictionary. (Bowen, 1905, 546)

Of course, those who spoke with a refined London accent obligatorily mastered standard English grammar and had a good command of the highly Latinate vocabulary which typified it. On the other hand, many speakers who had an equally good command of standard English grammar did not necessarily master the proto-RP model of pronunciation, and this is still the case! By the 19th century, RP was firmly anchored in the elite public schools of England, the most prestigious of which were all in the South, and students who did not adopt it often faced ridicule. Here we might claim that the cultural elite of England had at its disposal, for the first time in a thousand years, a linguistic model which might be qualified as an “acrolect,” that is, a “high class,” not simply “middle middle class (MMC)” accent of the kind identified by Trudgill. If the concept of an “acrolect” is not entirely defensible linguistically, one can imagine that the speakers of this new norm, who now possessed a harmonious RP accent combined with standard grammar and a rich lexicon (again, highly Latinate), certainly believed they did master such an English acrolect.

In the meantime, the least formally educated elements of the population (i.e., the majority) continued to express themselves in their regional basilects until the passing of the Education Act of 1870 when the standard English grammar (but not necessarily RP) was taught to all the British people. In such a system, and with such a mindset, there was no room for dialect speech or, for that matter, the Celtic languages which were still dominant in large regions of Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

The period between 1750 to 1800 thus marks the first stage in the foundation and definition of what I would describe as the new English “high language” which reached its pinnacle during the period of the United Kingdom’s imperial dominance around the world, between roughly 1815-1945.

In Laura Wright’s *The Development of Standard English, 1300-1800*, she summarizes the contributions of Richard Watts’ article entitled “Mythical Strands in the Ideology of Prescriptivism” (Watts, 2001, 29-48) and Jim Milroy’s “Historical Description and the Ideology of the Standard Language” (Milroy, 2001, 11-28), stating that their main arguments demonstrate that “prescriptism tends to follow, rather than precede, standardization, so that by the time a grammarian tells us what we should be doing, we have already been doing it (in certain contexts) for centuries: prescriptivism cannot be a cause for standardization” (Wright, 2001, 3). By the mid-18th century, the standard grammar and disparitary lexicon of English were, for the most part, well on the way to becoming “fixed.” This was certainly not yet the case regarding pronunciation.

Nevertheless, in terms of phonology, no fewer than eighteen editions of Daniel Jones’ *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary* were published between 1917 and 2012 (cf. Roach, 2012), during which time considerable innovative changes were introduced. Along with John Wells’ *Longman Pronouncing Dictionary*, it is still a bestseller around the world (more on their work in the next chapter).

15. Methodological Approaches

Introduction

Using the theoretical tools outlined in Chapters 10-12 and Franklin's orthoepistic sources as a guide (Chapter 13), as well as the revelations regarding his prescriptive views on language propriety (Chapter 14), this chapter presents the practical, methodological approaches that will serve as a foundation for interpreting the linguistic data assembled in Part III (Chapters 16-24).

To accomplish this task, I have developed a methodology which permits the analysis of extensive linguistic data gleaned from multiple sources. The objective is to find points of linguistic convergence. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate that the similarities between the English of 17th and 18th century America and England will contribute to a more refined identification of the colonial New England English "feature pool" (cf. Chapters 11 and 12). Systematic references to other dialects of North America and Great Britain will be central to this analysis.

In order of presentation, we shall examine the following sources, some of which have already been touched on.

- a. The data obtained from English orthoepists between the 16th and the 18th centuries.
- b. The (mis)spellings of colonial scribes who compiled the 17th and 18th century Massachusetts and New York town records. It will be shown that these conform nicely with information provided by the orthoepists. As one might expect, this plainly points to the transmission of phonological features from England to America.
- c. The study of a corpus of 3,000 lines of Benjamin Franklin's poems published in his *Poor Richard's Almanack* between 1733 and 1758, which allows for the study of the nature of his rhymes. This is an immensely helpful indicator of his Massachusetts pronunciation.
- d. In addition, for comparative purposes and as a scientific control, over 6,000 lines of Joel Barlow and Timothy Dwight's book-length epic poems (see below) were studied.

- e. The comparison of their rhyme schemes with Franklin's revealed an underlying unity of their phonological inventory.
- f. For supporting evidence, I have relied on evidence taken from the rhyme schemes and pronunciations of two mid-19th-century writers and poets, William Barnes (Dorset) and James R. Lowell (Boston).
- g. Finally, I exploit a large number of conservative dialect evidence gathered from a wide assortment of 19th- and 20th-century British and American linguistic sources, including a certain amount from my own fieldwork in southern Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia and Massachusetts, as well as in England and, in particular, Lancashire and Wales.

To repeat, these data are particularly revealing when the British and American dialectal features are similar or identical. What we shall see is that the comparative study of the orthoepists descriptions of 17th-century English concords perfectly well, as might be expected, with evidence gleaned from 17th-century New England and New York town records demonstrating that the North American feature pool was composed of phonetic elements imported directly from southern and eastern England. When English and American features are common to both varieties during this period, an underlying hypothesis is that this suggests that such shared characteristics predate or are at least contemporaneous with the colonization period.

Frequently, these details provide unexpected clues regarding the pronunciation of the early contact vernaculars. Expressed differently, the English and American data gathered in a) and b) above should be viewed as stemming from the same basic linguistic source, i.e. southern and eastern England. The evidence gathered in Part III largely supports this argument. Finally, when carefully analyzed, d) though g) provide precise and practical confirmation regarding pronunciations that were current during the 17th and 18th century.

Of course, when taken individually, each of the approaches above has its shortcomings and limitations. When combined and analyzed collectively, however, I am convinced they offer new and more revealing insights into the nature of 17th- and 18th-century British and American vernacular pronunciations than has been possible in the past. The reader will be the final judge.

The underlying strategy adopted here involves a systematic comparison of British and American English linguistic data of the 17th and 18th centuries, an approach that has rarely, if ever, been undertaken (cf. Beal, 1999). In addition to identifying the precise nature of Franklin's accent, and that of colonial New England koine, one of the objectives here was to determine the degree of linguistic transmission between the English motherland and the colonial American varieties. This, I believe, is one of the contributions of this book (more on this below).

1. Methodology and Sources

1.1 The Orthoepists

In Chapter 13, we outlined the work of the English orthoepists whom Franklin certainly consulted as models for his own orthoepistic reform but, as we shall soon see, there are many others whose work Franklin may have been aware of.

The orthoepists' testimonies are fundamental to our understanding of the phonological history of English during the earliest periods under study. As we shall see, many of the features which appear to be characteristic of Franklin's natural pronunciation tend to correspond to features which are generally associated with 17th-century English, rather than that of the late 18th century, confirming the intuitions of Alexander Ellis (1869) about colonial American English. This is significant because many points of pronunciation which Franklin commonly used in his rhymes (and which were shared by his fellow New England poets!) are often considerably different from the pronunciations he advocates for his own *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (1768/1779). Explaining the reasons for this will take up a considerable portion of our discussions in Parts III and IV (Volume II).

The work of the English orthoepists is also immensely useful in identifying not only the characteristics of the developing English mesolect between the 16th and 18th century. Quite frequently, the orthoepists indicate the features that they considered to be "vulgar" and to be avoided by "polite" speakers. In this manner, they often pinpoint innovations that are both of great sociolinguistic and diachronic value, demonstrating that the paritary and disparitary registers often co-existed among members of the same social class of speakers and that a significant degree of code-switching was commonplace, if not the rule. This may explain variant rhymes in the English and American poetry of the time. Poets were in possession of several registers which they exploited from time to time to fit their rhymes, for instance, Franklin's *what* ~ *not* and *what* ~ *that*. Occasionally, even they had difficulty distinguishing between which pronunciations were preferable, which also seems to have been Franklin's case (Chapter 25), hence his need of Stevenson's assistance in identifying "correct" London pronunciation. The same kind of conclusion can be drawn from the data gathered in the New England and New York town records (cf. below).

As I have already stated, although I have examined many of the original sources written by the orthoepists, I have relied on Dobson's masterful *English Pronunciation: 1500-1700* as a foundation for much of what is said below. On rare occasions where I have doubts or disagreements about his analyses or conclusions, I point this out by indicating my own interpretations and/or by

referring to more recent research by other scholars (e.g. the origins of [əu] in Chapter 16).

In this regard, André Mazarin's recent work of the diachronic data provide an additional, essential synthetic framework for discussion (Mazarin, 2020) focusing on the vital contribution of foreign orthoepists to the description of 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century English pronunciation (cf. below for more detail). Nevertheless, the numerous contradictions in the orthoepists' testimonies also reveal the complexity of the information gathered for any given period, but also the difficulty of tracing the phonological history of English which, as we shall see below, has generally not been approached from a holistic perspective. Significantly, very different patterns of evolution are revealed depending on the age as well as regional and social origins of the speakers.

As explained in Chapters 10, 11 and 12, my method is centred on a bottom-up sociolinguistic vision of society, but also on the overlapping, multidimensional nature of phonological change that takes place in any language (i.e. synchronic treatment of dialectological data vs a purely diachronic treatment based on textual evidence).

1.2 The New England and New York Town Records

It stands to sense that the data obtained from the findings of these English orthoepists would be vital in gaining a better understanding of the phonological features retrieved from the 17th-century New England and New York town records which, as mentioned above, largely confirm their observations. For this reason, the data gleaned from both sources should be viewed collectively. Again, these are based on careful studies of an array of misspellings which, in fact, open a window onto the vernacular pronunciations once current among the first English settlers – spelling errors which were particularly abundant in the 17th-century Massachusetts and New York town records.

Recall what Franklin thought about misspellings: “A countryman writes *aker* or *akur* for ‘acre’; yet the countryman is right, as the word ought to be spelt; and we laugh at him only because we are accustomed to be wrong” (Franklin, cited by Webster, 1789, 408).

Webster (Webster, 1789, 396, cf. Chapter 30) quotes Franklin again. “I once heard Dr. Franklin remark, that ‘those people spell best, who do not know how to spell’; that is, they spell as their ears dictate, without being guided by rules, and thus fall into a regular orthography.”

To my knowledge, George C. Krapp was the first linguist to exploit the town records in the second volume of his *The English Language in America* (1925). Two years afterwards, Anders Orbeck undertook his outstanding study entitled *Early New England Pronunciation* (1927), the results of which still provide

much valuable information. Curiously, aside from Kytö and Rissanen's plan for constituting a corpus of early American data (cf. Kytö, 1994), relatively few American linguists have explored the subject in-depth from a phonological perspective. Indeed, I agree with Montgomery's assessment of Krapp's linguistic legacy. He writes:

Interest in basic description has waned considerably in research on early AE, partly as a result of emphasis on quantitative approaches, which consider narrowly circumscribed sets of variable features and deem others unworthy of examination. The long-term result of this is the lack of comprehensive works such as Krapp (1925) (*yet to be superseded for the history of American pronunciation, but badly needing updating*). (my italics) (Montgomery, 2003, 15).

Although Part III of this book is not intended to replace Krapp's pioneering work, I have attempted to rework the data by combining the approaches outlined above. I shall argue, as did Orbeck (1927), that the numerous examples of variant spellings contained in these early sources reflect an array of competing 17th-century English dialectal pronunciations. I have argued that these composed the early colonial "feature pool," many of which were shared by speakers in the northern, middle and southern colonies. Note that each misspelling represents an attempt by the scrivener to reproduce the phonetic value of a specific vowel or consonant and often reflects his difficulty in choosing from a range of realizations he commonly heard around him.

The spellings of the New England and New York town records are considerably more uniform by the 18th century, as compared to those of the preceding century, certainly as a result of increasing literacy. Given that the 17th-century clerks who compiled the earliest records were first- or second-generation settlers, the features that are revealed almost certainly reflect the regional speech not only of colonial America, but also of their kinsmen back in England. More importantly for our purpose, these data provide priceless insight into the developing American koines, in our case, the nature of the local feature pool and, secondly, these sources offer precise ideas regarding the "phonetic ranges" for any given lexical item. As I stated in Chapter 12, the elements of the phonetic range provide us with the building blocks of early American phonology.

In this respect, I have attempted to correct an imbalance that was signalled two decades ago by Joan Beal (1999, 16), who pointed out that American linguists have tended to focus on those aspects of 18th-century British English which elucidate the development of early American English but generally go no further. I would add that there has also been a similar tendency among British diachronic linguists who sometimes view American English as a "New English" that has drifted away from the mother tongue. . Dobson, for instance, although he makes occasional references to contemporary American and Australian pronunciations, does not cite one shred of early American colonial data in his investigation or the work of George Krapp (1925), Orbeck (1927) and others are

not even cited.

In this respect, one of my objectives has been to unite as much relevant American and British data as possible to provide a more coherent, comparative view of the evidence. Although the information presented here is certainly not exhaustive, I have not found much early American phonological data that do not have direct parallels in regional forms of British or Irish English with the possible exception of “breaking” but, even in this case, there is a coherent explanation in favour of a southern English origin (cf. Chapter 16, Volume II).

1.3 18th-Century New England Poets

In my search to identify the pertinent features of Franklin’s New England pronunciation, I realized that other unexplored avenues needed to be explored. It is in this context that it struck me that no previous study of the rhyme schemes of Franklin’s poetry has ever been undertaken. All of the poems published by him, save one, were published in his *Poor Richard’s Almanack* between 1733-1758. The exception was Franklin’s earliest poem, composed in 1719 at the age of thirteen (cf. Chapter 2).

Although this approach is not without its own problems, I found that it offers fascinating insights into the pronunciation of educated New England gentlemen during the late 18th century.

Before continuing, I shall briefly outline some of the drawbacks and challenges to this approach, namely, the degree to which we can rely on the rhyme schemes to interpret contemporary 18th-century pronunciation. Are we dealing with perfect, near or approximate rhymes? To which degree can these reveal the precise qualitative and quantitative values of the vowels or consonants concerned? To respond to these potential difficulties of analysis, I devised a test which will be explained below.

Inspired by similar work done by Krapp (1925) on this subject, I chose to focus on the book-length epic poems of two of the best known New England poets. The first is Timothy Dwight’s *Greenfield Hill*, published in 1794 (7 Parts, 3,768 lines total). Dwight (1752-1817) was born in Northampton, Massachusetts, and was an American educator as well as a respected theologian who became the first president of Yale University. He died in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1817.

The second of these was Joel Barlow (1754-1812). Among his many publications is a long epic poem entitled the *Columbiad* (1809), in which he presents a glorified history of America leading up to the foundation of the United States (10 books, 7,350 lines, 416 pages). Barlow was a native of Fairfield, Connecticut, and is perhaps best known for his activities during and after the American Revolution. His militant anti-monarchist beliefs led him to France during the French Revolution where he supported the Republican cause. For his

dedication and revolutionary fervour, he was granted French citizenship and elected to the French Assembly. As one of its members, he voted for King Louis XVI's execution. His work is relevant in that his language was certainly close to that of Noah Webster, who was also a native of Connecticut.

Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Barlow and Dwight were born forty-six and forty-eight years after Franklin respectively. For this reason, one would expect their pronunciation to be slightly more advanced. The point of including them in this study was to provide a comparative backdrop for analysis.

Surprisingly, I found that the differences between their rhymes and those of Franklin to be relatively minor. Indeed, the fact that the rhyme schemes of Barlow and Dwight are so similar to Franklin's (despite the age gap), suggests that the pronunciations of these three men shared much in common, even though the registers used by the three men are not always the same.

The themes of Barlow and Dwight reflect a very disparitary and literary style of the Massachusetts/Connecticut koine that was well established by this time. As we saw in Chapters 11 and 12, I posit the existence of a disparitary literary koine which developed alongside a paritary, vernacular, oral koine which resulted directly from the mixing and levelling of basilectal varieties of the founder generation. As we shall see, Franklin's register, although it too was disparitary, occasionally slips into more relaxed, paritary registers (for examples, see section 1.3.2).

For further supporting evidence, I occasionally refer to the work of other American poets, such as two other Connecticut poets, David Hitchcock (1773-1849) and John Trumbull (1750-1831) as well as the Rhode Island poet, J. B. Ladd (1764-1786) and, on a few occasions, Philip Freneau (1752-1832) who, although born in New York, lived most of his life in New Jersey. All belonged to a class of men who were among the most highly educated Americans of their time. Once again, their poetry was studied in depth by Krapp (1925, II).

In addition to these New England sources, I have also used some of Benjamin Franklin the Elder's poems (Franklin's paternal uncle) because, here too, the rhyme-schemes reveal the pronunciations that were undoubtedly shared by his brother Josiah, Benjamin Franklin Jr.'s father, as well as his older siblings, who were also born in Northamptonshire. These insights offer glimpses into their East Midlands accent, at least in poetic form. Their linguistic influence on Franklin may have been considerable, especially during his childhood years.

1.3.1 *Franklin, the Poet*

On several occasions in his *Autobiography*, Franklin claims that he was not a particularly good poet. In the following passage, which he attributes to Richard Saunders, he acknowledges his weaknesses in an address to his readers:

If thou hast any Judgment in Poetry, thou wilt easily discern the Workman from the Bungler. I know as well as thee, that I am no *Poet born*; and it is a Trade I never learnt, nor indeed could learn. *If I make Verses, 'tis in Spight Of Nature and my Stars, I write.* Why then should I give my Readers *bad Lines* of my own, when *good Ones* of other People's are so plenty? (*Poor Richard's Almanack*, 1747b)

It is conceivable, if not likely, that Franklin was feigning modesty here in an attempt to correct one of his self-acknowledged flaws, his “vanity” and lack of “humility,” one of his failings of which a Quaker kindly reminded him (cf. Chapter 4). There is also an obvious humorous dimension to this passage.

We saw in Chapter 2 that, although he had abandoned the idea of becoming a poet at an early age (as a result of his father's criticism of his first published poems at the age of thirteen), he recognized it as a pleasant pastime and in his *Autobiography* states that “I approv'd the amusing one's self with poetry now and then, so far as to improve one's language, but no farther” (BF, p. 38). At another point he delves more deeply into the way he used poetry to improve his style of written English by converting passages from Addison and Steele's *Spectator* into verse and back again into prose.

But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time *if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it* (my italics). Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again... (BF, pp. 16-17) (cf. Chapter 2)

1.3.2 Franklin's Poetry: *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1719-1758)

As mentioned above, the most crucial source of evidence revealing Benjamin Franklin's natural pronunciation is to be found in the poems he published in his *Poor Richard's Almanack*, a highly popular piece which was published continuously for over thirty-six years (1732-1758). He ceased producing it after he sailed to England to defend the rights of the colonials. It includes passages in the form of prose, proverbs and poetry offering practical advice and popular wisdom to people throughout the colonies. These are presented diversely as rhymed couplets as well as in stanzas of varying length ranging, in general, from four to twenty lines or more. On more than one occasion, he includes three-line tercets involving a single rhyme. The range of registers drifts from paritary to disparitary and from secular to ecclesiastical.

His use of poetry was often intended for both playful and educational purposes and he clearly had a talent for it. As such, his poems were generally

conceived for a large, vernacular-speaking, albeit literate, audience. For this very reason, his poems are of particular value in that they yield important clues about the natural, popular register and that of his readers. The following extract on the subject of deafness gives a glimpse into this more paritary register:

No more I hear a great Church Bell,
 Than if it rang out for my Knell:
 At Thunder now no more I start,
 Than at the whisp'ring of a Fart. (*Poor Richard's Almanack*, December 1739)

We briefly addressed Franklin's early attempts at poetry in Chapter 2 of Part I. At the tender age of thirteen, while serving as a printer's apprentice, Franklin's very first poem was published in his brother James Franklin's newspaper, *The New England Courant*. Entitled "The Taking of Teach the Pirate" (80 lines), it deals with the death of the famous Blackbeard at the hands of Captain Maynard of Virginia. Sixty-five years later, Franklin wrote the following in his *Autobiography*:

They (i.e., his Blackbeard poem and another poem entitled "The Lighthouse Tragedy") were wretched stuff, in the Grub-street-ballad style; and when they were printed he (Franklin's brother James) sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise. This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances, and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars. So I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one... (BF, p. 15)

As we saw in Chapter 2, he always took his father's opinion very seriously (except in matters of religion) and he claims that it is this rebuke from his father that pushed him to concentrate his efforts on prose writing rather than poetry.

As we shall see in Part III, the paritary register in which some of these poems are written, i.e., in the "Grub-street-ballad style," is of immense value in identifying certain features of his early 18th-century Boston pronunciation, especially in this 1719 poem!

As mentioned above, the poetry of Barlow and Dwight was intended for a more formal audience than Franklin's and the grammar and lexicon seem to mirror what must generally have been considered to be a higher, literary register of the koine associated with New England gentlemen and intellectuals of their day. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, the kinds of rhymes employed by Barlow, Dwight and Franklin show a remarkable level of similarity in terms of rhyme type, and provide compelling evidence that the pronunciations of the three men were very close despite their age differences.

As might be expected, this was confirmed with overtly perfect rhymes but, intriguingly, this is also the case with several classes of rhymes that, from a modern standpoint, would be totally unacceptable. These examples are of particular importance to our story. The fact that the most peculiar of these

rhymes were shared not only by Barlow, Dwight and Franklin but also by other American and English poets, led me to conclude that these rhymes were intended to be perfect or at least near perfect ones. Otherwise, what would be the point of rhyming at all, particularly if most of their other rhymes were perfect? To verify this hypothesis, I concocted a test to assess the credibility of my overall approach.

1.3.3 The Hunt for “Imperfect” Rhymes

In order to accomplish this task, and to provide some perspective to this discussion, I set out to measure the percentage of “perfect” or “imperfect” rhymes. The challenge, of course, is in measuring the distance between genuinely “perfect” rhymes and “near-perfect,” “approximate” and truly “imperfect” rhymes in terms of vocalic quantity and quality. To do this I studied 1,482 rhymed couplets from Joel Barlow’s *Columbiad* (1809) that is, a sample of 2,964 lines taken from Books 1, 2, 3 and 4.

I followed the same approach with Dwight’s *Greenfield Hill* (1794) which numbered 1,686 rhymed couplets, obtained from Parts 2, 3, 5, 6, 7. This amounted to a sample of 3,373 lines of verse. I excluded Part 4 of *Greenfield Hill* on account of the multiple cross-rhymes involving rhymed couplets, tercets and quatrains which I feared could have skewed the overall results.

Since the major focus of Part III is to identify the New England feature pool more generally and Franklin’s natural pronunciation more specifically, the sample of Franklin’s poetry includes all of the poems identified in his *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. Again, these were composed between 1733 and 1758, the last issue being published the year he arrived in London as an agent for the colony of Pennsylvania (Chapters 8 and 9). The dates are very significant because the rhymes can only reflect his New England and Philadelphia-modified accent.

Franklin’s poetry includes 1,594 rhymes out of total of 3,188 lines of poetry. As mentioned in the introduction to this section, I added another 80 lines (40 rhymed couplets) from the first poem he ever published in 1719 at the age of thirteen, entitled “The Taking of Teach the Pirate.”

1.3.4 Perfect Versus Imperfect Rhymes

Based on what is known about 18th-century English phonology, the first step in identifying and estimating the percentage of perfect as opposed to imperfect rhymes was to identify those overtly faulty rhymes. As might be expected, a careful survey of the verses showed that the vast majority of rhymes used by all of the poets appeared to be perfect or near perfect. A few examples out of the array of paired rhymes used in this representative corpus suffice to give

the reader a general idea of their nature: *high* ~ *die*, *way* ~ *day*, *bear* ~ *year*, etc. Importantly, it is obvious that these and other words were not pronounced [haɪ] ~ [daɪ], [wɛɪ] ~ [dɛɪ] and [ɪɪ] ~ [jɪɪ] as represented in contemporary GA. Rather, and as we shall see in Part III, in 18th-century America, they would have resembled [hæɪ] ~ [dæɪ] (or [hɛɪ] ~ [dɛɪ] among older speakers, etc.), [wɛː ~ wɛɪ] ~ [dɛː ~ dɛɪ]. Other conservative speakers born in the early 17th century were probably still pronouncing these words [hæɪ] ~ [dæɪ], [wæɪ] ~ [dæɪ]. By the mid-18th century, most New Englanders would have pronounced “ear” and “year” as either [ɛːɪ] ~ [jɛːɪ], although [iːɪ] ~ [jiːɪ] were gaining ground in the London area (cf. Chapter 16) and were also present in the New England feature pool.

The point of this exercise was thus to determine, as precisely as possible, the nature of Franklin’s 18th-century Boston pronunciation (again with possible Philadelphia influences). As I have pointed out previously, based on this information, the next step was to determine whether the proto-phonemic scheme presented in his RMS:

- a. reflects his own New England accent (this is the position of most linguists who have studied the question);
- b. reveals that differences in pronunciation between the disparitary New England koine and the disparitary English standard were minimal (this was basically Krapp’s position);
- c. demonstrates that Franklin’s RMS is an attempt to reproduce educated London English pronunciation (which is my working hypothesis based on my initial study of his RMS);
- d. exposes certain features of his New England accent in his RMS transcriptions and, if so, which ones? (I shall demonstrate that there are numerous examples of this which I consider to be lapses in attention).

The entire purpose of Part III is thus not only to answer these specific questions, but also to present the potential paritary or disparitary pronunciations present in the New England feature pool. This introduction is intended to be an initial survey. Nevertheless, the results reveal a considerable amount of interesting data.

1.3.5 Examples of “Imperfect Rhymes”

When analyzed from a contemporary GA/RP standpoint, I have concluded that a small proportion of the total number of rhymes, approximately 15%-20% (cf. below), are “imperfect.” These tend to fall in the same phonological categories. Particularly problematical, for instance, are mid front vowels, and mid and low back vowels. These will be examined in detail in Part III (Chapters 20-22) and again in Part IV (Chapters 26-27).

Barlow (*Columbiad*) *sea ~ way, bleed ~ spread, feet ~ great, steel ~ fell, conceal'd ~ fill'd, year ~ air, stream ~ claim...*

Dwight (*Greenfield Hill*) *sea ~ convey, years ~ cares, feast ~ guest, fears ~ bears, head ~ display'd, beam ~ flame...*

Franklin (*Poor Richard's Almanack*) *sea ~ way, deceit ~ great, year ~ share, hear ~ err, defeat ~ hate war ~ air, want ~ scant...*

As we shall see, based on the historical phonology of English, many of these rhymes can be explained quite easily, even if one is surprised to encounter some of them in poems composed on the eve of the 19th century. I am now convinced that these are not simple eye rhymes.

The following categories of rhyme, however, are far less easily elucidated and will be the subject of considerable discussion in Chapters 21 and 22 of Part III. We shall see that this has direct implications with regard to Franklin's portrayal of his RMS back vowels (Chapters 26 and 27).

The following examples of back vowels give a clearer indication of what I mean: *home ~ come, road ~ God, stone ~ gone, doom ~ come, blood ~ stood*, etc. We shall see that these same rhymes are shared by earlier English poets (i.e. Shakespeare, Dryden, Donne, Milton, Pope, etc.) and reflect an early state of the language (i.e. theoretically, pre-1600). This may help clarify why Webster, for instance, was convinced that New England preserved the “purest” (i.e. more conservative) pronunciation of English.

The task is thus to make sense of these rhymes (cf. in particular in Chapters 16, 17, 18, 20, 21 and 22). We will see that the answer to these questions will contribute to clarifying a number of historical and dialectological mysteries. Some of the clues to these phonetic riddles are also to be found in 19th- and 20th-century English and American dialects. The answers will serve as a guide to assist us in identifying Franklin's personal phonemic system and will be presented in the conclusions to Part III (Chapter 24) and Part IV (Chapter 28).

1.3.6 Tentative Results of This Statistical Analysis

Fig. 15.1 Percentages of perfect and imperfect rhymes.

	N° of lines analyzed	N° of imperfect rhymes	% of imperfect rhymes	% of perfect or near-perfect rhymes
Barlow's <i>Columbiad</i>	2,964 Books 1-4	229/1,482 rhymed couplets	15.45%	84.45%

	N° of lines analyzed	N° of imperfect rhymes	% of imperfect rhymes	% of perfect or near-perfect rhymes
Dwight's <i>Greenfield Hill</i>	3,373 Pts 2, 3, 5, 6, 7	336/1,686 rhymed couplets	19.93%	80.07%
Franklin's <i>Poor Richard</i> + "Blackbeard"	3,188 1733-1758	296/1,594	18.57%	81.43%

* I have presented some evidence in Part III that Barlow's Connecticut English may have been slightly more innovative, hence his rhymes appear slightly less problematical!

1.3.7 Interpretating the Data

The ultimate question is whether one can determine the extent to which these were really poorly-crafted, "imperfect" rhymes or, on the contrary, perfect or close rhymes distinguished by only slight distinctions in quality or vowel length?

As we can see from this initial study, as one would expect, the large majority of rhymes are perfect or near perfect. Based on analyses that will be presented in Part III of this study, and despite their outward appearances, a significant proportion of these so-called "imperfect" rhymes will also be shown to be perfect rhymes, thus reducing the margin of problem rhymes to a bare minimum.

Indeed, one might ask why on earth would Franklin, Barlow, Dwight, Lowell, Trumbull, Ladd, Freneau and others have rhymed the same classes of words incorrectly? Burton (2010) in his very careful analysis of William Barnes' 19th-century Dorset poems, asks the very same question:

Some words that occur at least once with ēa are rhymed with words having /i:/ as well as those that have /e:/ (i.e. my [e:]). *In the face of these apparent inconsistencies, what are we to suppose? That Barnes didn't know what he was talking about? (Unlikely in a man who wrote four careful accounts of the phonology and grammar of his dialect – 1844, 1847/48, 1863, 1886) That he was a slack poet, content with a near rhyme whenever he was pressed for an exact one?* (my italics) (Possible, but this doesn't square well with a poet who took such evident delight in the intricacy and exactingness of his rhyme schemes and stanza forms, though of course an occasional near rhyme is inevitable) ... (Burton, 2010, 75; cf. also Gachelin, 1981)

Recall also that Barnes was one of Alexander Ellis' informants for Dorset. I wholeheartedly share Burton's assessment and believe his remarks apply to this study too. Quite honestly, given my own doubts, after reading his work on this issue, I was considerably relieved.

Two additional questions will be examined in Part III. Are these problem-rhymes a reflection of what the poets may have imagined (rightly or wrongly) to be older poetic conventions that were retained in the colonies for aesthetic purposes? If so, were they viewed as being stylistically superior to more paritary

registers of vernacular speech? Are some of these features simply conservative English dialectal traits or, on the contrary, innovative realizations that developed in the 17th- and 18th-century American regional koinés (cf. below for discussion)? To my knowledge, Franklin's poetry has never been studied before and the results, in my view, provide the key to understanding major aspects of early New England "polite" pronunciation.

1.4 William Barnes (1801-1886), Dorset Poet

Considering the pertinence of Burton's observations above, as a further control, I decided to further exploit T. L. Burton's *William Barnes's Dialect Poems, A Pronunciation Guide*, 2010. As previously mentioned, his meticulously detailed accounts describe many of the same obstacles I encountered in my own research. Furthermore, as it turns out, certain features he describes of Dorset English have proven more useful in identifying phonological data extracted from the poetic compositions of Franklin and that of his fellow New Englanders than I would initially have imagined, in particular, involving New England short o (cf. Chapters 21 and 22). Although the features are not always identical phonetically, they are often unexpectedly similar, showing that rhymes which today would seem improbable or even outlandish for modern GA/RP speakers, are shared by both 18th-century New Englanders and 19th- and 20th-century speakers of English dialects. It turns out that many of the most challenging features (New England short o, for instance) are also shared by the dialects of eastern England and the Midlands and clearly have the same diachronic origins.

Burton also writes that "In many instances where a pronunciation suggested by Barnes' spelling or rhyme may seem surprising... especially to current speakers of southwestern dialects, confirmation of the same or a similar pronunciation at an earlier date is provided by Dobson" (Burton, 2010, 40). Burton suggests that the English dialectal data he observes in Dorset is confirmed by the 17th- and 18th-century orthoepists. My point here is that I have found that the same is true of the New England colonial dialect. Data obtained from the colonial town records and the rhymes of the New England poets provide an important convergence of evidence. I am convinced that data of this kind yields coherent information revealing subtle aspects of the overall diachronic evolution of English that have often gone unnoticed.

As explained in Chapters 10, 11 and 12, this can be explained by the fact that English has always been composed of multiple varieties that have evolved in different directions and rates of change (cf. below for a more detailed discussion). This was dependent on not only geolinguistic factors but, as we have seen, the disparitary and paritary registers of the institutions in which they have evolved, not to mention the affective axis of language.

The result has been that many of Burton's observations and conclusions conform closely to my own. Supporting information from Burton's research on the pronunciation of Dorset, Somerset and, more generally, the English Southwest combines well with dialect data obtained from my own dialect sources and fieldwork in both England and America (see below).

In conclusion to this section, Burton's evidence reveals a significant number of dialectal features of southwestern English dialects that help explain some of the particularities of the New England vernacular confirming, once again, the kinship and continuity between them and other southern and eastern English basilectal vernaculars more generally. Quite extraordinarily, proof of this continuity provides the answer to a question posed by Burton regarding the nature of certain obscure Dorset rhymes (2010, 60). The answer is provided by data obtained from similar rhymes in 18th-century New England poems (cf. Chapter 22).

1.5 The *Biglow Papers* and the Massachusetts Paritary Koine

A crucial source that is similar to Barnes' work, yields evidence about the non-standard speech spoken in mid-19th century Massachusetts, namely, a relatively little-known collection of poems and prose writings by James R. Lowell entitled the *Biglow Papers* (1848). The *Biglow Papers* were first published in the *Boston Courier* newspaper in 1847 on the eve of the Mexican-American War. What makes it unique for the time is that it is largely written and composed in the broad Massachusetts vernacular. It is certain that Franklin heard slightly older forms of this vernacular (paritary register) during his lifetime, and perhaps even used himself with his playmates in Boston. If he did, he spent the rest of his life condemning this paritary register and seeking its total eradication (cf. Chapter 14). The language presented in this book clearly has its roots in colonial New England and it would be absurd to imagine that it arose as a result of contacts with non-English speaking immigrants which in this case could only have been the Irish! However, fleeing from starvation caused by the potato famine, they were only then arriving *en masse* to Massachusetts, settling primarily in areas such as South Boston. The inhabitants are now called "Southies."

Lowell was born in Cambridge, Boston, in 1819. He was an ardent abolitionist whose objective in writing this scathing satirical piece was to condemn in the strongest possible terms the brewing war against Mexico, which he perceived to be an ungodly pretext by the US government to steal Mexican and Native American lands. In these papers, he condemns "Anglo-Saxon" patriotism and militarism, which he sees as a smoke-screen for spreading the institution of slavery into what was soon to become the southwestern United States, and what Joel Garreau (1981) was to call "Mex-America" in his *Nine Nations of*

North America.

As mentioned above, Lowell's work is of crucial interest for this study in that his poetry and prose are all delivered in the broad vernacular speech of rural Massachusetts, albeit as it was perceived and rendered by an educated Boston intellectual. However, a close look at it demonstrates that he knew this variety intimately. Lowell would have known and heard many older Boston speakers as a child who belonged to Barlow and Dwight's generation. As such, his rendition of the local vernacular reflects the old-fashioned, non-standard, paritary speech of older, less formally educated citizens in his community that he heard around him in his youth. I would estimate that it reflects a form of paritary English as it was spoken around 1800.

The result is that Lowell's spelling pronunciations provide his readers with an excellent idea of some of the more idiosyncratic pronunciations which we will discuss in the following chapters: *wal* [wæɫ] "well," *skeered* [ski:ə(ɪ)d] "scared," *affeered* [ə'fi:ə(ɪ)d] "afraid," *gut* [gʊt] and *cum* [kʊm] for "got" and "come," *holl* [hɒɫ] for "whole" (cf. New England short o, Chapters 21 and 22), *heerd* or *heern* [hi:ə(ɪ)d] ~ [hi:ə(ɪ)n] for "heard," etc. All of these were shunned by the aforementioned poets and "polite society" but, significantly, aspects of these realizations were inherited from the earliest waves of English settlers to New England demonstrating that, beside the prestigious disparitary register of the New England "koine," there was indeed a functionally separate, stigmatized, oral paritary register that persisted within the working-class institutions of Massachusetts (cf. Chapter 12). This would appear to confirm my hypotheses posed in Chapter 12 regarding

- a. the existence of paritary non-standard registers within the New England koine, and
- b. the continuity in the use of these paritary varieties from early in the colonial period. It is this non-standard, paritary dialect that persisted well into the mid-19th century; many aspects of it have survived until the present day.

In passing, the reader may be interested in knowing that James R. Lowell and Mark Twain were friends, and it is believed that Lowell's use of the vernacular in his writings inspired Twain to do the same, hence his famous *Huckleberry Finn* (1884 in UK, 1885 in US) and *Tom Sawyer* (1876), a revolution in English-language literature at the time which many contemporary critics considered to be a travesty.¹

1 Having said this, they were preceded by Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, who wrote in Scots, and William Barnes in Dorset dialect.

Although, for our purposes, I have concentrated only on the phonological aspects of the *Biglow Papers* (1848), this source also provides dialectologists with a goldmine of information about the non-standard morphology, syntax and lexicon, not to mention idioms, of Massachusetts. In support of Krapp's assertion regarding the close linguistic bonds between northern and southern American varieties, both standard and non-standard, during colonial times, the data revealed here demonstrate how grammatically similar this early 19th-century rural Massachusetts vernacular is in many ways to contemporary Appalachian English (more on this below). This also attenuates claims that Appalachian English emanates from powerful Scots-Irish influences.

Grandgent's 1899 article, "From Franklin to Lowell: A Century of New England Pronunciation," outlines the main features common to Franklin's reform and Lowell's *Biglow Papers*. However, like the majority of linguists, and as the title suggests, Grandgent assumes that Franklin's 1768/1779 orthographic reform proposal reflects the latter's "New England" accent, although he accepts that Philadelphia influences may have affected his accent. His *Reformed Mode of Spelling* (RMS) also led Krapp to believe that Franklin's speech was more or less identical to educated English pronunciation of the time, a position which should be viewed with some circumspection.

One of the major points of this book is to demonstrate that, if Franklin's RMS appears to be so close to London English, it is largely because his objective appears to have been to erase his own regional Massachusetts pronunciation and offer what he considered to be a universal and representative model of English, not only for Americans, but for all English speakers in the British Empire.

Grandgent offers only one short passage from Lowell's *Biglow Papers* to demonstrate what he calls the Massachusetts "Biglow dialect." However, the extract is a transcription of the opening lines of Shakespeare's *Richard III* (Grandgent, 1899, 239) and, although his phonological *interpretation* is informative, from a sociolinguistic perspective, it is not the most appropriate extract to represent the Boston-area vernacular, at least as Lowell sought to portray it.

I have chosen two passages which I believe are more representative of Lowell's work. The first is in prose and the other is a short extract from one of his fierce anti-slavery poems. These offer a far better idea of early 19th-century Massachusetts paritary register at all levels of language and it is precisely the kind of vernacular English that Franklin abhorred and sought to correct in his "English School" (Chapter 14). An even more conservative brand of this same variety was undoubtedly omnipresent in the streets of Boston during his youth.

1.5.1 Prose Extract

Wal, Hosea he com home considerabal riled, and arter ² I'd gone to bed I heern Him a thrashin round like a short-tailed Bull in fli-time.³ The old Woman, ses she to me, ses she, Zekle, ses she, our Hosee's gut the chollery or suthin anuther ses she, don't you Bee skeered, ses I, he's oney amakin pottery, ses I. He's ollers on hand at that ere busyness like Da & Martin, and shure enuf, cum mornin, Hosy he cum down 'stares full chizzle, 'hare on eend and cote tales flyin, and sot rite of to go reed his varses to Parson Wilbur bein he haint aney grate shows o' book larnin himself, bimeby he cum back and sed the parson wuz dreffle tickled with 'em as i hoop you will Be, and said they wuz True grit.

<i>wal</i> – [ˈwæl] = well	<i>cum mornin</i> [kʏm ˈma:nɪn ~ ˈma:ɪnɪn] = when morning came
<i>cum</i> – [kʏm] = came	<i>stares</i> [stæ(ɪ)z ~ stæ(ɪ)z] – stairs
<i>riled</i> – [ɹəɪld] = riled, angry	<i>full chizzle</i> [fʏl ˈtʃɪzl] = full chizzle “full throttle”
<i>arter</i> – [ˈa:tə(ɪ)] [ˈaɪtə(ɪ)] = after	<i>hare on eend</i> [ˈhæə ɒn ˈi:nd] = hair on end
<i>a thrashin</i> – [əˈθɹæʃɪn] = a-thrashing	<i>cote tales</i> [ˈkɔt ˌtɛ:lz] – coat tails
<i>heern</i> – [hi:ən] = heard (also <i>heerd</i> [hi:əd])	<i>sot rite of</i> [ˈsɔt ˌɹəɪt ˈv:f] = set right off
<i>gut</i> – [gʏt] = got	<i>reed his varses</i> [ˈri:d ɪz ˈva:(ɪ)səz] = read his verses
<i>suthin anuther</i> [ˈsʏθɪn əˈnʏðə(ɪ)] = something or another	<i>haint</i> [heɪnt] = ain't
<i>skeered</i> [ski:əd] = scared	<i>larnin</i> [ˈla:(ɪ)nɪn ~ ˈlæ:ɪnɪn] = learning
<i>oney</i> [ˈɹne] = only	<i>bimeby</i> [ˈbæɪ ɪn ˈbæɪ] = by and by
<i>amakin</i> [əˈmɛ:kɪn] = a-making	<i>dreffle tickled</i> [ˌdrɛfl ˈtɪklɪd] = very pleased/amused
<i>ollers</i> [ˈɑ:ləz ~ ɒlə(ɪ)z] = always	<i>I hoop</i> [ˌəi ˈhɔp ~ hu:pʔ] = I hope
<i>that ere</i> [ˈðæt ɛə ~ ˈðæt ɛɪ] = that there ⁴	<i>True grit</i> [ˌtru ˈgɹɪt] = the genuine truth

One of the unintentional “slips” in Franklin’s RMS transcriptions concerns the verb “learn” which he normally transcribes as **lyrn** [lɹɪn] but which, on one occasion, he transcribes as **unlarn'd** [ʌnˈlæɪnd] “unlearned” just as indicated above in Lowell’s prose.

2 *After* is pronounced /ˈa:təɪ/ by Barnes but other Dorset pronunciations were common with [ɛ: ~ ɛ:] (Burton, 2010, 66).

3 I recall hearing a similar expression in Virginia during the 1970s, “Tighter ’n a bull’s ass at fly time.”

4 The loss of [ð-] in “that there” also occurs in the Appalachian English (cf. Christian & Wolfram, 1978).

1.5.2 Extract from Lowell's Poetry

'T wouldn't suit them Southern *fellers,	fellows (cf. Ch. 23; <ow> > <er>)
They're a *dreffle graspin' set,	great
We must *ollers blow the *bellers	always ['blə(ɪ)z]; bellows ['bɛlə(ɪ)z] (Ch. 23)
Wen they want their irons *het;	heated [hɛt] (to enchain the Africans)
May be it's all right *ez preachin',	as [ɛz] (Ch. 19)
But my *narves it kind o' grates,	nerves ['næ(ɪ)vəz] (Ch. 19)
Wen I see the overreachin'	
O' them nigger-drivin' States.	
*Them thet rule us, them slave-traders,	Those that ['ðɛm ðɛt]
*Haint they cut a thunderin' *swarth	Haven't ; swath [swɑ:θ~/ swæ:(ɪ)θ]
(Helped by Yankee renegaders),	
Thru the *vartu o' the *North!	virtue ['væ(ɪ)tu], "North" also spelt No'th [nɒ:θ]
We begin to think it's *nater	nature ['nɛ:ʃəɪ] (cf. BF's transcription, Ch. 27)
To take *sarse an' not be riled;--	sauce [sɑ(ɪ)s] "sass," also [sæs] (Hall, 1942)
Who'd expect to see a *tater	potato ['tɛ:ʃə(ɪ)]
All on *eend at bein' *biled?	end [i:nd]; boiled [bɔɪld ~ baidl] (cf. Ch. 16 and 23)
*Ez fer war, I call it murder;--	As for war [ɛz fə 'wɑ:(ɪ)] (also [wa:ɪ ~ wæ:ɪ])
There you *hev it plain an' flat;	have [hɛv]
I don't want to go no *further	further ['fɜ:(ɪ)də(ɪ)] (/d/ for /ð/, SE England)
Than my Testyment fer that;	
God hez sed so plump an' fairly,	
It's ez long ez it is broad,	
An' you 've *gut to git up airly	got to get up early ['gɒt tə 'gɪt ʌp 'ɛ(ɪ)li] (Ch. 22)
*Ef you want to take in God.	

Nevertheless, although the English in this passage shares comparable characteristics with various basilectal English varieties studied in Part III, I interpret Lowell's portrayal of Boston English to be a reflection of the paritary Massachusetts koine during the first decades of the 19th century. While it lacks many of the morphological characteristics and regional lexical forms common to the older basilects, it nevertheless reflects the non-standard grammatical characteristics that were common to the majority of the English basilects in

eastern and southern England (“sharedness principle”) which is the very reason they were retained (multiple negation, use of *ain’t/hain’t*, a-prefixing, etc.).

Seen from another perspective, this is also why peripheral dialectal characteristics were progressively ejected from the “feature pool.” The consequence is that the “phonetic range” for each word progressively shrank with each succeeding generation. Moreover, the fact that many of these features are also common to Appalachian English is not an accident and are reflections of what the colonial paritary registers of the late 18th- and 19th-century koinés once resembled throughout the former colonies.

This outline provides slightly more context for the reader to consider what were ultimately exaggerated claims made by 19th-century observers such as H. T. Armfield, in an 1893 article entitled “The Essex Dialect and its Influence in the New World,” and Mr. D. Gurteen, a native of Haverhill, Essex, who after reading Lowell’s *Biglow Papers*, enthusiastically proclaimed that, “we might almost say that he has written them in the dialect of Essex.” While his restriction of the evidence to Essex is exaggerated, his observations offer precious confirmation that the Massachusetts vernacular was close to that used in eastern England: *wall* for “well,” *twalve* for “twelve,” *a-gooïn* for “a-going,” *kiver* for “cover,” *jön* [dʒøn] for “join,” *squar* [skwa:ɹ] for “squire,” *buoat* [bræt ~ buənt] for “boat,” *keeount* [kəəunt ~ kəpunt] for “count” (recalling Franklin’s critical remarks of *keow* for “cow”), *ollers* for “always,” *housen* for “houses” (cf. Viereck’s comment about this word in Chapters 11 and 12), *sew* for “sowed,” *mew* for “mowed,” *shruck* for “shrieked,” *squoze* (i.e. also common in Lancashire!) for “squeezed,” *hev* for “have” (Chapter 19), *give* for “gave,” *snew* for “snowed,” *wull* for “will,” *I broke my fast* for “I had breakfast,” *of to year* for “this year,” *we* for “our” (i.e. *we tea* for “our tea”), *our’n* (Appalachia: with *his’n*, *her’n*, *your’n*) for “ours,” etc. The latter are also southern English features. Also noted was Armfield’s fascination for the East Anglian nasal “twang” which he also heard in Massachusetts.

In the face of such evidence, Krapp (1925, 25) was probably correct in concluding that the intuitive impressions of native dialect speakers should not be brushed off too hurriedly but, to be sure, these examples, as interesting as they are, do not mean that the Massachusetts-English koine stems uniquely from Essex but, rather, much broader regions of southeastern England which included Essex (cf. Chapter 11). Recall Fischer’s analysis, who came to the same conclusion independently based on other evidence. Quite extraordinarily, Fischer chose Haverhill, Mr. Gurteen’s hometown, as the geographic centre-point of a 7,000-square-mile area region which contributed the greatest number of settlers to Massachusetts. This “roughly included the region that was defined in 1643 as the Eastern Association – Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Lincolnshire – plus parts of Bedfordshire and Kent” (Fischer, 1989, 31).

This provides linguistic support for a Massachusetts founder generation having its source in this broad area of eastern England. Nevertheless, there was an additional wave of settlers from the West Country, most notably from Somerset, Wiltshire and Devonshire, which could explain some of the western English features to be described in Part III.

2. Modern Dialects for Comparative Analyses

These short extracts demonstrate the extent to which Lowell's rendition of New England vernacular English is linguistically instructive at all levels. In Chapters 11 and 12, I quoted Ossi Ihalainen (1994, 205) who, in an article entitled "The Dialects of England since 1776," wrote that the dialects of England had remained stable from 1776 until the end of the 19th century, during which time "no radical changes took place." The effects of the 1870 Education Act, which he describes as the "end of an era," was a landmark event that terminated the relative linguistic stability of the British basilects, and he writes that "Generally speaking, dialects appear to have been far more conservative than ever believed possible by scholars." The contemporary dialectal evidence presented in Chapters 16-24 demonstrate the extent to which his remarks are valid, and this alone justifies the use of 19th- and 20th-century dialectal evidence for our comparative purposes.

I hasten to add that I am not assuming that any contemporary conservative American dialect is a relic of "Elizabethan" or "Georgian" English or any former stage of the English language. However, I do see the living non-standard dialects for what they are: varieties of English containing numerous and, quite often, remarkably conservative features that preserve pronunciations or aspects of grammar or vocabulary that, depending on the example, have changed relatively little since the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Of course, this is not to ignore the numerous innovative features have entered these very same varieties. This can pose a dilemma for linguists regarding certain phenomena such as "breaking" (i.e. [hɛ:ɪd 'hɛjɪd] for "head," [bi:ɪt] for "bit," etc.). Present-day "lax" vowels were often tenser and were lengthened during the 17th and 18th centuries (Lowell's "end" spelt *eend* for [i:nd], or is it [i:ɪnd]?). This feature appears to be related to Franklin and Webster's references to, and condemnation of, "drawling" in New England that was referred to in Chapter 14 (cf. Chapter 16, Chapter 17 and Chapter 18 for more discussion). I cited Webster, who wrote that it was a feature associated with "country people," an object of "ridicule" and a "great error," and due to "a careless, lazy manner" which he associates with "a drawling, whining cant" and a "certain class of people." "Too much pains cannot be taken to reform the practice" (Webster, 1789, 108).

Is this an American innovation or does it find its source in earlier 17th-century English dialects? Notice that his reference to the "whining cant" has been a

common reference to the New Englanders but also the East Anglian Puritans (cf. Chapters 11 and 12).

I shall show that some examples taken from 17th-century colonial town records suggest that “breaking” is likely to have already been present in the English of the first settlers in Massachusetts. But, as we shall see, answers to such questions are complex and often inconclusive.

2.1 Contemporary English Dialect Evidence

Based on this reasoning, I cite evidence from 20th-century English dialects, which I interpret to be offshoots of the old basilects, as well as conservative American dialects (i.e. the descendants of the non-standard, paritary colonial koinés). These are meant to serve as a “scientific control” whenever they can illustrate:

- a. the existence of specific phonological features that are absent in RP and GA, or
- b. clarify certain ambiguities in the orthoepists’ descriptions that are difficult to grasp for modern American or English standard speakers.

I have thus concentrated on two primary contemporary sources of evidence. The first is Graham Shorrocks’ *A Grammar of the Dialect of the Bolton Area, Part 1, Introduction, Phonology* (1998) on account of the fact that Bolton English shares features that are common to other Midland varieties. Secondly, they are often of a kind that resemble earlier basilectal varieties of this region. Furthermore, I have stated on numerous occasions that, given that 80% of the incoming 17th-century Quakers to Pennsylvania and Delaware came from this same region (more specifically, Cheshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire, cf. Fischer, 1989), the earlier forms of this variety presumably contributed to the initial feature pool of those colonies. The Pennsylvania Assembly was dominated by the Quakers in both Houses when Franklin worked there as a clerk and, after 1751, as an elected member of the Assembly where he interacted with men who very probably spoke a modified koine founded on this variety. They were still a dominant force in the Assembly when Franklin lost his seat in 1764 after proposing that Pennsylvania become a royal colony, a move that could potentially have led to a loss of Quaker privileges.

It also bears mentioning that the English of the Middle American colonies played an important role in the formation of General American English, which is by far the most representative form of American English heard today throughout the US. In Chapter 12, I referred to Krapp’s conclusion that “the so-called Eastern type of American English stands nearer to the southern type of British English, and the Western or General type of American English stands nearer to northern British English” (Krapp, 1925, 29-30). I proposed that Krapp may have mistaken

“northern” English with what might in fact be this Northwest Midland variety of English that characterized the speech of the founder generation of Pennsylvania and the Delaware Valley during the crucial establishment of that regional koine (for more evidence, see Joseph Hall below).

Whenever relevant, I have also used helpful supporting evidence and observations from Joseph Wright’s *English Dialect Grammar* (1905) as well as the *Survey of English Dialects* (1962-1971) and similar supporting evidence.

2.2 Contemporary American Dialect Evidence

A second major source I have exploited is Joseph S. Hall’s 1942 unpublished PhD thesis on the vernacular Appalachian English dialect of Tennessee, entitled *The Phonetics of Great Smoky Mountain Speech*. In his introduction, he argues that settlers from Pennsylvania and the Delaware Valley migrated southward during the last decades of the 18th century. We have already seen on several occasions that Franklin noted that 10,000 Pennsylvania families moved to North Carolina. From there, many of these filtered into the nearby Smoky Mountains. Hall also mentioned Tidewater Virginia, settled initially by Englishmen from southeastern and, especially, southwestern England,⁵ but these were probably mixed with 30,000 settlers already living in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley. This formed a motley group that also moved westward into these mountains.

In many instances, it is to be suspected, North and South Carolina were merely stopping places for the settlers; the migration into the Smokies, in the main, was part of that larger movement down from the North, particularly Pennsylvania, Delaware, and the Virginia Tidewater. (Hall, 1942, 12)

If the founder generation principle holds water, and I believe it does, my interpretation is that these American Midland forms of colonial English and the Virginian varieties (strongly influenced by southwestern English varieties) would have fused in the southern Appalachians, hence the numerous southern English phonological characteristics, many of which seem traceable to 17th- and 18th-century southern English basilectal varieties.

Montgomery paid homage to Hall’s work in his 1994 article entitled “The Contributions of Joseph Sargent Hall to Appalachian Studies.” Furthermore, Hall’s work is the only complete phonological study of a single speech community that was ever undertaken in America at a time when the vernacular was still the dominant form of language. I have heard and studied varieties of Appalachian English and can vouch for the accuracy of his transcriptions.⁶

5 By the end of the 18th century, the African populations in the coastal areas of the Chesapeake Bay and the Piedmont region of Virginia were proportionately enormous in many counties.

6 Joseph S. Hall never received the recognition that he so well deserved and his thesis and

Nevertheless, as pointed out by Wells (2005), like many American linguists, Hall does not distinguish between long and short vowels, which can be frustrating for the phonetician. As a rule, however, and as noted in Chapters 17 and 21, even American lax vowels tend to be longer than their RP English equivalents. As suggested above, the relative shortness of RP vowels was probably atypical in the majority of 17th- and 18th-century English dialects.

For our purposes, the linguistic interest of Appalachian English is that it would appear to be descended primarily from the paritary register of the 17th- and 18th-century American koines that developed in the middle colonies of Pennsylvania and Delaware and in Virginia and North Carolina, where they all fused in the southern mountains, particularly during the second half of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century.

The vernacular in this Appalachian region is relatively uniform and may be reflective of the kind of English heard by the 18th-century English travellers discussed in Chapter 11. All of this brings to mind the impressions of the ballad collector, Cecil Sharp, when he wrote in 1917 that southern mountain speech was not “American” but rather characteristic of an older variety of “English” English. Of course, there is a definite romantic flavour to his declarations but, at another level, they are indicative of a native speaker’s intuitions and cannot be dismissed too hastily. Here again, just as Boutheiller et al. (2022) made a connection between the lyrical ballads of Normandy and Québec (cf. Chapter 11), Sharp and Karpeles did the same between Appalachia and England more generally (Sharp and Karpeles, 1917). It is this book that Sharp stated that the people of Appalachia spoke “English” and not “American.”

Indeed, coming full circle, many of the characteristics observed in Appalachian English are shared with Lowell’s Biglow dialect as well as varieties from regions of the southern United States such as the Outer Banks of North Carolina or Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay. Due to its relative isolation and lesser exposure to formal schooling (cf. Christian & Wolfram, 1978), Appalachian English (and other communities associated with more conservative varieties of

later research on the culture of the Smokies were for too long a time overlooked. A shy and modest man, Hall was discouraged from continuing his phonological research due, in part, to an excessively harsh and critical review of his work by Raven McDavid (1943). Nevertheless, Hall’s observations reveal not only his keen feel for the local language, but also his profound love of the people and region he knew so well. Thankfully, he compiled a 500-page glossary which came to the attention of Michael Montgomery and the two men met in 1990. The latter gave Montgomery his accord to publish the manuscript. Although Hall’s work formed the core of the dictionary, Montgomery collated and enriched it with his own fieldwork data. Thanks to Montgomery’s diligence, the outcome was the *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English*, University of Tennessee (2004), a wonderful publication which serves as a final tribute to Hall’s legacy. Sadly, it came out after the latter’s death. This work has served as the basis for a revised edition, the *Dictionary of Southern Appalachian English*, edited by Michael Montgomery and Jennifer Heinmiller, 2021.

English) retains numerous features that were certainly once shared throughout the colonies, both North and South. This includes non-standard grammatical and lexical features that Franklin scornfully rejected.

3. Diachronic Contextualization and the Great Vowel Shift

Describing Franklin's orthographic reform without precise diachronic and dialectological contextualization would be a fruitless endeavour in that there would be no way of knowing how his proto-phonemic system might relate to either the genesis of American English or the input varieties that contributed to its creation. Put another way, this would make the comparison between his own Massachusetts speech and late 18th-century London English an impossible task. As already stated, the purpose of Part III is to attempt to place Franklin's orthographic scheme in a broader sociolinguistic, geolinguistic and diachronic context which might allow us to compare the innovative and conservative features which co-existed with the New England feature pool.

For decades, nearly every discussion about the Great Vowel Shift (henceforth GVS) has revolved around the assumption that, since the end of the Middle English period, the English phonological system has evolved in a steady, linear fashion culminating with the Modern English Received Pronunciation or its General American equivalent. That Otto Jespersen was able to theorize this evolution is one of the crowning achievements in the study of historical English phonology, yet it presents an extremely limited vision of the kinds of phonological and phonetic change that has actually taken place cross-dialectally.

The traditional account of the Great Vowel Shift thus consists of a relatively orderly and systematic raising of ME long vowels that occurred in two major stages. The first was completed around 16th century involving what is known as a "chain shift," a process which begins with the raising of one phoneme which, in turn, provokes a "chain reaction" causing vowels in the system to rise and fill empty slots left by the others. The explanation often given for this process is that the shifts were motivated by the rational, if unconscious, desire to avoid the advent of confusing homonyms. The second stage was completed by the beginning of the 19th century.

The ME vocalic system is presented within a tidy system constructed on the basis of qualitatively identical long and short vowels, their phonemic value being determined by their length. The Middle English vocalic system is generally presented as having resembled the one presented here:

Fig. 15.2 Middle English cardinal vowels.

	Front	Mid	Back
High	/i:/ ~ /i/		/u:/ ~ /u/
High-mid	/e:/ (~ /e/)		/o:/ ~ /o/
Low-mid	/ɛ:/ (~ /ɛ/)	/ə/	/ɔ:/ ~ /ɔ/
Low	/a:/ ~ /a/		

The timeline generally presented for the GVS is presented as follows and affects only ME long vowels:

Fig. 15.3 The timeline of the Great Vowel Shift.

ME /i:/ > /əi/ (1650) > ai (1800)	ME /u:/ > /əu/ (1600) > /au/ (1800)
ME /e:/ > /i:/ (1500)	ME /o:/ > /u:/ (1500)
ME /ɛ:/ > /e:/ (1650) > /i:/ (1700+)	ME /ɔ:/ > /ɒ:/ > /o:/ (1640+) > /ou/ (1800)
ME /a:/ > /æ:/ (1600) > /ɛ:/ (1650) > /e:/ (1700+)	

Even though the GVS presented in both figures above has been simplified for the sake of clarity, and despite the exceptional value of Jespersen’s model, his interpretation was designed to explain the evolution of RP and GA American English, two systems which, despite their differences, are far closer to each other than either are to the many stigmatized non-standard British and American dialects. In this sense, it is obvious that RP and GA share a common history with GA American, trailing slightly behind in terms of phonological change. A quick look at the proto-RP English pronunciation at the beginning of the 19th century demonstrates that it is far closer in many respects to contemporary GA English than to RP. I see this as another example of the historical continuity between the two varieties. If this is true for GA, why should it not be the same for non-standard American dialects?

In my introductions to the discussions on mid front vowels (Chapters 17-18) and mid back and low back vowels (Chapter 21), I explain that the GVS and the subsequent dialectal treatments of these vowels would be better understood if they included not only the high-mid and low-mid front phonemes indicated in the charts above, but also mid vowels [e(:)] and [o(:)] which, I argue, played a central role as conduits and, at one point or another, certainly served as allophones of each of these phonemes (both front and back respectively). It is these allophonic bridges that permitted the vowel shift to occur in the first place. For instance, the rise from ME /ɛ:/ > /i:/ certainly did not occur spontaneously in this manner

without passing through intermediate vocalic stages just indicated, that is [ɛ:] > [ɛ:] > [ɛ:] > [i:]. Overlapping and competing systems were thus inevitable within the same speech communities, often depending on social status or geographic criteria.

The same kinds of “bridge” or “transition” vowels permitted the raising or lowering of any given phoneme in the system. But as we shall see, phonetic change occurs in overlapping stages with some varieties introducing innovative features and others tending to be more conservative. Paradoxically, RP English, often considered to represent the “best” or “purest” English pronunciation is in fact one of the varieties that has evolved the furthest away from the older phonological models of English.

Taking into consideration the entirety of English varieties would help provide a clearer idea of how the GVS operated, or failed to operate, as the case may be. Just a few examples will suffice. Educated late-18th-century New Englanders, including Franklin, still pronounced *sea* and *see* as [sɛ: ~ sɛ:] or perhaps [sɛ: ~ sɛ:] respectively, alongside innovative [si:] when it suited them. We shall see in the next chapter that this [i:] in *Meat* words is first recorded at the end of the 16th century in London. These observations are corroborated by Orbeck’s data from the 17th-century Massachusetts town records (Orbeck, 1927).

Wright (1905, 587-588) recorded *sea* as being pronounced [sɛ:] in Ulster, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire (and also [zɛ:] for Somerset, Devonshire and Dorset). Wright gave examples of *see* as [sɛ:] for Durham, Leicester and Norfolk as well as diphthongal [sei] throughout the North and Midlands. This kind of data can easily explain certain kinds of rhymes found in earlier English poetry, including those that I have classified as “imperfect,” for the purposes of this study. The key here is that poets were far freer and adept at mixing dialect pronunciations than we may have previously imagined.

For those who are not well acquainted with the study of English dialects, these few examples show that the vocalic system of certain varieties, particularly those most geographically removed from London (in this case, in the West and North), and spoken by people further down the social Chain of Being, never underwent the full range of changes associated with GVS. In many instances, the evolution of certain vowels froze at various stages of the shift which explains the conservatism of many English dialects that we will be discussing in the following chapters, and this is precisely the case for Franklin’s own idiolect, at least in phonological terms.

Conversely, in some instances, certain ME long vowels belonging to these dialectal varieties have evolved far beyond the current GA/RP stages (cf. Chapter 16, *Price* vowels and Chapter 20, *Mouth* vowels). Again, the key to understanding the genesis of American English lies in accepting the intrinsic volatility of the phonological systems of English dialects not only during the Early Modern

English period but also at the present time.

One of the crucial questions that arises here is where one should trace phonemic frontiers at any given period of time, including the present. As we shall see, the phonemic divisions of GA or RP do not necessarily apply cross-dialectally. As I have explained in the introduction, I tend to prefer the use of broad phonetic transcription to demonstrate how these shifts occurred. Nor do I automatically attribute phonemic status to any given vowel when speaking of the English language in general terms.

In sum, it is evident that dialectal variation has been vastly underestimated, especially by theoretical but also by historical linguists and this is a point to which I shall regularly return in the subsequent chapters (cf. Ihalainen, 1994). Jim Milroy (1982, 47) makes a very important point in this regard in the conclusion to his article entitled, “Probing under the Tip of the Iceberg”:

If twentieth century speakers observe great complexity of regular variation between /a/, then what is the status of characteristic historical “findings” of the kind that say ‘E Mod E /a/ was fronted to [æ] in the seventeenth century”? Surely the language was not simpler in the past than it is now. It seems as if the data-base of prevailing theories – e.g., British phoneme theory (e.g. Gimson 1980) and North American generative phonology – is still standardized and normalized speech, to a much greater extent than it should be. Thus, if we want to show what native speaker competences really are like and if we hope to explain linguistic change, we shall have to probe further under the tip of the iceberg than we have to date.

He makes the same point in an article entitled “Historical Description and the Ideology of the Standard Language.” As the title indicates, he argues that our understanding of the linguistic history of English has been warped by a “standard ideology,” the ultimate consequence being that “the history of the language as a whole is very largely the story of the development of modern Standard English and not of its manifold varieties” (Milroy, 2000, 11). Think also of Milroy and Milroy’s *Real English* (1993), which stresses the sociolinguistic and dialectological value of the study of English varieties.

The central point of Part III, then, is to do just that: to probe under the iceberg. As alluded to previously, the position adopted in this book is that each variety, inasmuch as it can be identified and defined, should be viewed as a separate linguistic entity or subsystem⁷ meriting a distinct diachronic study of its own. Although no single variety can be detached from those spoken around them (or the registers imposed from above and below), this implies a separate sociohistorical and sociolinguistic history for each. The existence of a given dialect going down to the micro-dialectal level implies unique shades of culturally diverse traditions.

⁷ As dialectologists well understand, defining such entities is a daunting task in and of itself.

Another rarely discussed topic that is addressed in detail in the following chapters concerns the rising and falling of lax vowels (and also their frequent lengthening!). In Part III, we will see numerous cases of this phenomenon. Franklin's English shows traces of this as well and a few unintended vestiges can even be seen in his RMS (cf. Chapter 28).

ME /i/ > /ɪ/ > /ɛ/

ME /ɛ/ > /ɪ/

ME /ɛ/ > /æ/

ME /a/ > /æ/ > /ɛ/...

4. André Mazarin's Scheme: A Diachronic Framework

When I had nearly completed collecting the data for Part III and Part IV, I discovered André Mazarin's 2020 open-access article entitled "The Developmental Progression of English Vowel Systems, 1500–1800: Evidence from Grammarians." In this very informative, insightful and remarkably concise study, the author makes what I consider to be several essential contributions to our understanding of English historical phonology. In this respect, his work provides a helpful framework to make greater sense of the often confused and contradictory data recorded by not only the orthoepists themselves, but also the multiple sources I have discussed above. A considerable number of his observations and deductions support or reinforce many of the conclusions to which I had come to over the past years while writing this book. This is partly due to a common interlingual approach that have assisted us both in clarifying certain points of earlier English pronunciation. For practical purposes, the discovery of his work led me to backtrack and restructure many of my conclusions within the framework of his diachronic system.

Indeed, although English scholars, including the orthoepists, have often compared English pronunciation to various continental languages, Mazarin, in addition exploiting the work of the English orthoepists themselves, concentrates on what he describes as "continental witnesses", that is, French, Italian, German, Dutch and Danish grammarians who described English pronunciation over this three-hundred-year period. Mazarin studied their work in detail and, in this way, reveals abundant and precious phonetic and phonological details about English pronunciation as they heard and interpreted it. Their contributions are especially valuable in determining the precise quality and quantity of certain vowels. For example, front and back high-mid, mid and low-mid vowels were often only casually described by contemporary English orthoepists, largely because they assumed people of their own day knew exactly how they sounded.

Secondly, although he broadly agrees with Barber (1997), that is, that the development from Early Modern English to Modern English occurred in three

stages, with Stages I, II and III corresponding to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries respectively, Mazarin describes the development as having occurred in four *overlapping* phases which are tied to what he describes as “dialect types.” Rather than presenting precisely dated “vowel shifts,” his scheme reveals slowly evolving system types (or dialect “types”) which he classifies accordingly as Types A, B, C and D, with A being the oldest and corresponding roughly to the 1500s, while Type D is the most recent, ending around 1800.

An additional advantage of Mazarin’s approach is that it succinctly covers not only the period addressed so brilliantly by Dobson (1500-1700), but he also investigates the period between 1700 and 1800, which is less well known for reasons explained by Beal (1999).

For each “dialect type,” he identifies conservative and popular subtypes such as B1 and C1, and more innovative and ultimately prestigious B2 and C2 categories, which served as transition phases respectively. Although he dates the B1 and B2 categories rather precisely, with B1 spanning the period from 1550 to 1625 and B2 covering a seventy-five year stretch between roughly 1600 and 1675, the beginning and endpoints of the C1 and C2 categories are far less precisely delimited (cf. below) and only a close reading of his article allows the reader obtain a more precise hints concerning of the timeframes involved. Based on this, I have attempted to identify the basic chronologies as follows: Type C1 (1590 – 1680) and Type C2 (1700 – 1750s). The lack of a more precise temporal framework here may be related to Beal’s point about the radical drop in the number of orthoepists during the first half of the 18th century (cf. Beal, 1999, 36-72).

Mazarin states that the first faint traces of Type C, as reflected in vernacular London speech, are recorded by Bellot in 1586 (e.g. “wait” pronounced [wɛ:t]). He describes Cooper (1655-1698) as being the key witness of Type C1 and states that the highpoint of C1 was reached around 1680, only twenty-six years before Franklin’s birth. For this reason, we would expect his parents and older siblings, born in Northamptonshire, to have been C1 speakers themselves. The beginning dates and end dates for C2 are somewhat uncertain. Because Mazarin gives the beginning and end dates for Type D to be from 1730 to 1800, I have interpreted the C2 phase to stretch from about 1680 to around 1750, but this is only a personal interpretation. Any error or misinterpretation of Mazarin’s work is entirely my own.⁸

To add more context to these phases, I have added a third column in Figure 15.4 showing the earliest birth and latest death dates of the forty-eight orthoepists he

8 This may be due in part to the fact Type C varieties are increasingly “normalized.” In my own experience, for instance, the spellings in the New England and New York town records are substantially more regular and “standard” during the 18th century than during the preceding century.

assigns to each dialect type: Type A, B1, B2, C1, C2 and D respectively. Of these, however, on account of the conservative nature of their speech, he excludes the accounts provided by Palsgrave and Bullokar as belonging to the Middle English period (pre-GVS). For this reason, their names are not included in Figure 15.5 below.

Fig. 15.4 Dialect types and corresponding times schemes.

Dialect types	Mazarin's dating scheme (*my interpretation of dates)	Earliest births and latest deaths of orthoepists' according to dialect type
Type A	1500-1650	b.1513 - d.1709
Type B1	1550-1625	b.1550 - d.1625
Type B2	1600-1675	b.1595 - d.1703
Type C1*	1580 - 1700 (1680 high point)	b.1600 - d.1771
Type C2*	1680-1750	b.1655 - d.1814
Type D	1730-1800	b.1707 - d.1847

As can be seen here, Mazarin's dialect "types" correspond to imbricated shifts in pronunciation rather than to individual, linear sound changes that would have occurred at rigidly assigned dates. I believe that this vision is far closer to the mark than the "either/or" analyses that are often proposed (cf. ME *i*: > [əi] or [ei] in Chapter 16). As we shall see, the dialectal picture that I have painted in this discussion demonstrates how aleatory attempts at defining their precise quality and determining the dates of sound changes can be.

Indeed, as has already been stated, many changes associated with the GVS have never occurred in contemporary English dialects, particularly in northern England and Scotland. When considering the traditional interpretation of the GVS, depending on the key word, some pronunciations of certain ME long vowels and ME diphthongs have remained frozen at specific points in time. We shall see that *Wait*, the key word associated with ME /ai/, was pronounced [æi] during the B1 phase, but the reader may be surprised to know that this same pronunciation of "wait" was recorded as [wæit] in Dorset during the mid-19th century and also in Norfolk during the 1970s (cf. Chapter 23). Scores of similar examples will be brought to light in the following chapters in Part III.

Importantly, even in the same speech community, sound changes initiated by one social class are not necessarily adopted by another. This was eloquently and convincingly demonstrated in recent times in Labov's article on "The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores" (1966) in which he illustrated that a given phoneme, in this case /r/, can change at different rates of speed according to social level of the speaker (for discussion, cf. Chapter 10).

As indicated above, this fact casts serious doubts on the usefulness of drawing overly strict boundaries between “synchronic” dialectal and geolinguistic research and “diachronic” studies of language.⁹ I am therefore hopeful that the approach adopted here will help highlight the variable nature of the colonial American English when considering the various sources at our disposal and the individual elements of the colonial feature pool (cf. Chapters 10-12 for further discussion). Using Wells’ key words as a guide, this will allow us to determine the phonetic ranges of each vowel and consonant in the feature pool. Viewed from this perspective, some order can be made of what, on the surface, appears to be a chaotic mass of contradictory phonetic data.

For this reason, any discussion regarding the genesis of American English requires solid grounding in the historical phonology of the English of Britain itself. Mazarin’s scheme is quite ingenious in placing the entire discussion within a broad, flexible, interwoven linguistic and sociolinguistic context.

In Chapter 13, we reviewed the work and possible influences of a handful of orthoepists whose work Franklin probably consulted and, in some cases, studied in some detail. I have indicated these in Figure 15.5 below with an asterisk and classified these in accordance with the dialect types imagined by Mazarin. The fact that they are directly mentioned or alluded to by Webster in his *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789), whose personal notes Franklin had given him three years earlier, seems to reinforce the possibility their work may have inspired his own.

Considering that Franklin was dealing first hand with the most illustrious English scientists, parliamentarians and members of the English court and Privy Council, often on a daily basis, he was very familiar with their accents and probably felt no real need to refer to Sheridan’s or Buchanan’s works to construct his own system, the only major orthoepists whose work he would have had access to before 1768. Note that Mazarin classifies Webster as speaking a Type D variety. We shall see that, as reflected by the contemporary poetry, the New England popular koine appears to be more conservative than the Type D variety or even Type C2. This kind of evidence will be particularly valuable in Chapters 26 and 27 when we compare the New England data with Franklin’s proto-phonemic RMS.

9 The issue is rendered more complex if one takes into account André Crépin’s distinction between “historical linguistics” and “diachronic linguistics,” the former including sociohistorical data and the latter restricted to the purely technical dimension of linguistic change (Crépin, 1991, 61).

Fig. 15.5 Mazarin's classification of orthoepists according to dialect type.

Type A	*Sir Thomas Smith (Essex) 1513-1577 (Cambridge University) *?John Hart (London) 1525?-1574 *?Charles Butler (Buckinghamshire) 1560-1647 (Oxford University) *?Alexander Gil (Lincolnshire) 1565-1635 (Oxford University)
Type B2	*John Wilkins (Northamptonshire) 1614-1672 (Oxford University) *John Wallis (Kent) 1616-1703 (Cambridge University)
Type C1	*?Christopher Cooper (Hertfordshire) 1655-1698 (Cambridge University)
Type C2	Benjamin Franklin (Boston) 1706-1790 ¹⁰ Thomas Spence (Newcastle) 1750-1814
Type D	Thomas Sheridan (Dublin) 1719-1788 (Trinity College) John Walker (Middlesex) 1732-1807 Sir William Jones (London/Anglesey) 1746-1794 (Oxford University) Robert Nares (York) 1753-1829 (Oxford University) Noah Webster (New Haven, Connecticut) 1758-1843 (Yale University)

* The asterisk identifies those orthoepists whose work may have influenced Franklin's RMS (cf. Chapter 13). The question mark signals some uncertainty as to whether Franklin actually consulted their work.

Interestingly, the orthoepists that Franklin studied correspond to the earliest periods of the Early Modern Period. Franklin and especially Webster shared the view that the golden age of English literature and language had ended after the reign of King George I in 1727. For reasons that we shall see in Part III (Chapters 29-30), this might be explained by the fact that Franklin recognized features of the earlier English of England which corresponded to his own New England pronunciation. This may have contributed to his impression that the English language was in decline. And yet, paradoxically perhaps, he still chose to adopt the speech of the educated London elites as a model for his RMS.

Unlike most linguists, Mazarin gives a place to the American Franklin and Webster, including them alongside the English-born orthoepists. This has also been my position for the reasons already stated at various times in Part II. I feel certain that the 19th-century dialectologist, Alexander Ellis, who studied their work, would have agreed.

My interpretation of Mazarin's data is that the shift from B2 to C1 spread out from the London area as early as 1600-1625. Nevertheless, he describes the "full flowering" of subtype C1 as taking place around 1680, twenty-six years before Franklin's birth. We have also noted that Franklin was the youngest of Josiah Franklin's sons, and that most of his siblings were born in the 17th century. This corresponds to a transitional phase marking the beginning of C2 (cf. Figure 15.1). We shall see that, in many respects, Franklin's idiolect was anchored more in the

¹⁰ According to Mazarin, Franklin was a C2 speaker, but this is based on the data in his RMS.

C1 phase than in the C2 phase. In some respects, we shall see that certain vowels, for instance, New England short o find their origins in midlands and the Norfolk area, prior to the *Strut-Foot* merger which said to have occurred after 1600. We shall see that, in large areas of the midlands of England and Norfolk, this shift never occurred, nor did it occur fully in New England until a few decades ago (Avis 1971).

Yet, based on his *Reformed Mode of Spelling*, Mazarin accurately identified Franklin's accent with the C2 phase, adding that Franklin spoke "like a Londoner." The entire point of Part III is to demonstrate that the RMS does not reflect his natural Boston idiolect. Franklin was certainly bidialectal and capable of shifting from idiom to the other and, when it suited him, moving from one social register to another. In his written English, we see how easily he shifts from the secular to the ecclesiastical standard, but also from disparitary to paritary registers.

Figure 15.6 represents my adaptation of Mazarin's system as I have understood it. Any errors in this table are my own, not Mazarin's. I have added GA and RP for comparative reasons in that the last two appear to be part of a continuum with RP representing the last and most evolved variety in the history of the English language.

Fig. 15.6 The Great Vowel Shift: dialect types and time frames.

Front vowels (cf. Part III, Chapter 15-17)						
Timeline	Key word	Type A 1500s	Type B 1550-1675	Type C 1650-1750	Type D 1730-1800	GA/RP
ME i:	PRICE	ɪi ~ ɛi ¹¹	ɛi	ɛi ~ əi	ai ~ əi	aɪ
ME /i/	KIT	i/i	i/i	i/i	ɪ	ɪ
ME /e:/	FLEECE ¹²	e: ~ i:	i:	i:	i:	i:
ME /ɛ:/	MEAT	ɛ:	^{B1} e: ~ ^{B2} i:	^{C1} e: ~ ^{C2} i:	i:	i:
ME /ɛ/	DRESS	ɛ	e ~ ɛ	e ~ ɛ	e	ɛ
ME /a:/	FACE	æ:	æ: ^{B1} ~ ɛ: ^{B2}	ɛ: ^{C1}	e:	eɪ
ME /a/	TRAP	a	æ	æ ~ æ: ¹³	æ	æ
ME /a/	BATH	a ~ æ	Æ	æ:	æ: ~ a: ¹⁴	æ:/ɑ:

11 Cf. Mazarin, 2020, 17 (footnote 20), 18 for Wilhelm Viëtor's interpretation

12 As we shall see in Chapter 18, [e:] and [ɛ:] pronunciation certainly co-existed alongside [i:] until recently.

13 "During the full flowering of Type C in the 1680s, Cooper provides the only picture of extensive TRAP /æ/ and LOT /ɑ/ lengthening until the mid-1700s" (Mazarin, 2020, 10).

14 "The brand-new START-BATH-PALM set is establishing itself as phonemic /a:/" (Mazarin, 2020, 11).

ME /a/	PALM	æ	æ ~ a ~ (ɑ:) ¹⁵	æ: ~ a: ~ ɑ: ¹⁶	æ: ~ a:	ɑ:
ME /a:r/	SQUARE	æ:ɪ	æ:ɪ	æ:ɪ	ɛ:ɪ	ɛ(:)ɪ / ɛə
ME /ar/	START	aɪ	æɪ ~ æ:ɪ ¹⁷	æ:ɪ	æ:ɪ ~ a:ɪ	ɑɪ / ɑ:
Back vowels (cf. Part III, Chapter 19-24)						
ME /u:/	MOUTH	u: ~ ɔu	ɔu ~ (ɔ:u)	ɔu əu	ɔu ~ əu ¹⁸	au
ME /u/	STRUT	u	ʏ ^{B1} / ə ^{B2}	ʏ ~ ʌ	ʌ	ʌ
ME /o:/	GOOSE	u:	u:	u:	u:	u:
ME /o:/	FOOT	u	u ^{B1} ~ ʊ	ʊ ¹⁹	ʊ	ʊ
ME /ɔ:/	GOAT ²⁰	ɔ:	ɔ:	ɔ:	ɔ: ²¹	ou/əu
ME /ɔ/	LOT	ɔ	ɑ	ɑ ~ ɑ: ²²	ɑ: ~ ɒ:	ɑ:/ ɒ
ME /ɔ:r/	NORTH	ɔɪ	ɒɪ ~ ɑɪ	ɑɪ ~ ɑ:ɪ	ɒ:ɪ	ɔɪ/ ɔ:
ME /ur/	NURSE	uɪ	ʏɪ	ʏɪ	ʌɪ / əɪ	əɪ/ɜ:
Diphthongs (cf. Chapter 23)						
ME /ai/	WAIT	æi ²³ ~ ɛi	^{B2} æi ~ ɛi ~ ɛ:	ɛi ~ ɛ:	ɛ:	eɪ
ME /au/	TAUGHT	au	ɑ:	ɑ: ²⁴	ɑ: ~ ɒ:	ɒ: ~ ɑ:/ ɔ:

- 15 “Gil’s advanced type uses [ɑ:] in two environments: before historical /l/, as in *call, balm, salt, walk, half* ; and before nasal clusters, where [ɑ:] varies with TRAP and [au], as in *France*” (Mazarin, 2020, 3).
- 16 “Daines records TAUGHT (with the “full and broad” sound of “French a” [ɑ:]) in *baume* “balm,” *France, chance* (cf. Gil in section 3.1); and in <-arC> after /w/, as in *warm, quart* /kwa:rt/ (Mazarin, 2020, 10).
- 17 “When ME /arC/ first lengthened from [æɪC] to [æ:ɪC], words like *start* crowded into phonetic territory that was already claimed in Type B by words like *stared* /stæ:rd/” (Mazarin, 2020, 7); “Bellot’s dialogues also give us our earliest glimpses of TRAP lengthening in a handful of transcriptions like for *yard* [jæ:ɪd]” (ibid.). Note that popular, contemporary Massachusetts “start” is pronounced with an intermediate, r-less [sta:t].
- 18 Clearly, other variants were circulating. Sir Isaac Newton, from Lincolnshire, equated this pronunciation with French *aou* [au], but Lincolnshire, then has today, probably already had [æu] and [ɛu], see Figure 28.5.
- 19 Mazarin does not specifically address the *foot-strut* non-split in modern varieties, both having [ʏ]. I therefore have not inserted it in the Type C phase.
- 20 Mazarin describes /o:/ as high-mid (my [ɔ:]) for Types B, C and D. As I argued in the introduction, I also believe that mid [ɔ:] and high-mid [ɔ:] and [u:] were probably allophones of this high-mid /o:/ in certain varieties throughout this entire period.
- 21 The jump from /ɔ:/ to /ou/ is too great here. Bridge vowels in [ɔ:] had to have existed for quite some time for the passage to [ou] to have occurred. The same is true for the shift from /ɛ:/ of *Meat* vowels to GA/RP /eɪ/. A lower [ɛ] certainly co-existed alongside [ɛ:] for much of the Type A-D phases.
- 22 “Cultivated speakers scorned both LOT and TRAP lengthening into the mid-1600s” (Mazarin, 2020, 10). Both are characteristic of modern American English [lɑ:t] and [tɹæ:p].
- 23 Mazarin believes this was the most common realization of this vowel at the time, not /ɔ:/ as in RP.
- 24 Thomas Sheridan (1789, xv, xxiii) records these same qualities as late as 1789. He confirms that TAUGHT–NORTH vowel is unrounded /ɑ:/ when he says it is pronounced with the mouth opened “wide.” This is precisely the description Kenrick, Nares and Walker and Grandgent give of *Law* and *Taught* words.

ME /au/	LAW	au	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ: ~ ɒ:	ɒ: ~ ɑ:/ɔ:
*ME /oi/	CHOICE	ɔi	ɔi ~ xi? ~ ʌi	ɔi ~ xi ~ ʌi	ɔi ~ vi	ɔi/ɔi
-y and -er endings						
ME /i/	HAPPY	i ~ ei	i ~ ei	i	I	i/ɪ
ME /ər/	LETTER	əɪ	əɪ	əɪ	əɪ	əɪ/ə

*Mazarin does not discuss either the CHOICE or CURE key words in his article. I have added the LAW and NURSE key word to which he does refer. I have also included the GA and RP models for comparison.

Note here that, for Type B *Price* words, I have introduced [ei] here based on Orbeck’s examples which show that *Wait* and *Price* words were homonyms for some New Englanders, both being pronounced [ei]. We shall see that Kenrick also advocated this pronunciation as late as 1773 in his *A New Dictionary of the English Language*. However, [æi] was also part of the “phonetic range” of *Price* words (cf. Mazarin, 2020, 9). Among many other distinctive traits to be examined in Part III, for instance, I also argue that *Wait* was probably still pronounced [æi] by some (as it was by Gil and others) but it also stands to sense that modern /ei/ is simply an evolved reflex of older /æi/ and did not simply appear in the 19th century as is generally argued. If [ɛ:] arose so early, one can imagine [ei] may also been current throughout the A, B, C and D stages until the present time. It would simply not have be used in all dialects.

As we can see here, the shifts from one “Type” to another can take place over a period of generations with considerable overlapping between them. Innovations tend to be stigmatized initially. The patterns are often marked by the gradual acceptance of formerly stigmatized features. These innovative pronunciations bubble up from lower sociolinguistic strata to gain acceptability over time among self-appointed polite speakers. Many of these innovative features are most obvious today in RP English and are outlined in Chapter 25. As mentioned above, Mazarin’s type D, or proto-RP phase, corresponds more closely in a number of ways with GA than with RP showing, once again, that GA and RP represent two different stages of the same lineage.

5. Wells’ Lexical Sets and ME Sources (1982)

Wells’ lexical sets are now viewed as essential for any study of contemporary dialects and are systematically used most variationists. The phonemic transcriptions here represent contemporary RP English.

Fig. 15.7 Wells' lexical sets.

KIT /ɪ/	FLEECE /i:/	NEAR /ɪə/
DRESS /ɛ/	FACE /eɪ/	SQUARE /eə/
TRAP /æ/	PALM /ɑ:/	START /ɑ:/
LOT /ɒ/	THOUGHT /ɔ:/	NORTH /ɔ:/
STRUT /ʌ/	GOAT /əʊ/	FORCE /ɔ:/
FOOT /ʊ/	GOOSE /u:/	CURE /ʊə/
BATH /ʊ/	PRICE /aɪ/	happyY /ɪ/
CLOTH /ɒ/	CHOICE /ɔɪ/	letter /ə/
NURSE /ɜ:/	MOUTH /aʊ/	comma /ə/

As shown in Figure 15.7 above, I have integrated Wells' lexical sets alongside their corresponding ME pronunciations for comparative purposes. This necessitated changing the order in which they are normally presented. The usefulness of this scheme will hopefully be revealed in the conclusions to Chapter 24 and Chapter 28 of Parts III and IV.

Conclusion

To conclude, when the evidence from English orthoepists, the New England and New York town records and poems by New England poets (including Benjamin Franklin the Elder and Benjamin Franklin Jr.) concord, I take the shared features to reflect phonological characteristics that likely formed part of the 17th- and early 18th-century colonial feature pool.

Furthermore, when contemporary American and English dialect data align with one another and also with the earlier textual data just mentioned, I take this convergence to provide important reinforcing support.

Keeping in mind Shorrocks' important observation about the sometimes arbitrary or ambivalent indication of phonemic boundaries within the Bolton dialect, the same can be said about imposing precise phonemic boundaries inter-dialectally, either now or in the past. As stated previously, the reason for this is that each speech community and the social groups that compose it (i.e. institutions) have their own unique histories. For this reason, linguistic change proceeds at different rates of speed. Under these conditions, any given "phoneme" can include a range of allophonic variants, some of which can sometimes be interpreted to be allophones of adjacent "phonemes." It is because of this unstable state of affairs that vowel shifts occur in the first place. Although they tend to be far more resistant to change, a similar process can be

observed among consonants (particularly, vocoids such as /r/, /l/, /w/, /j/). One can thus assume that the “phonetic ranges” discussed in Chapter 11, and the multitude of examples to be outlined in Part III, are open laboratories displaying the rudiments of linguistic change.

These “phonetic ranges” are integral components of the feature pools of each colony and one can imagine that these varied somewhat from settlement to settlement (and their corresponding institutions). Some variant pronunciations were dominant, others more peripheral. Depending on the degree of “sharedness” between the regional dialect types in any given settlement, in conjunction with contemporary sociolinguistic judgements regarding their appropriateness, the tendency was to eliminate those pronunciations judged to be on the fringes. The latter were cast off much as one might discard an old dress or suit that has gone out of fashion. This was done in accordance with the demographic and societal mixes in each colony.

Another consideration to keep in mind is the “uniformitarian principle,” the idea that linguistic processes which have been observed and demonstrated to be valid today were most likely also true in past centuries. For this reason, I assume that dialect variation was as great and almost certainly even greater across England and English-speaking Wales and Scotland during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries than it was during the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries.

Mazarin described his first impression of the data presented by the orthoepists as looking like “an overgrown thicket.” This was also my first reaction. My ambition, however, was not to integrate the data into a tidy scheme, as he has done (successfully in my view), but rather to bring the vernacular basilectal varieties of the kind just described into the discussion and to accept that English, in past centuries as now, is comprised of multiple competing linguistic systems and subsystems operating concurrently in accordance with their own phonological, grammatical and lexical specificities and traditions.

The permeability of these systems to competing ones has always depended on the social and geographical barriers that separate or unite the speakers, as well as speakers’ acceptance (or rejection) of their own varieties and acceptance or rejection of those of others (i.e. Giles’ convergence vs divergence). This brief portrait of the English language in 18th-century America and England is an attempt to reveal what I believe James and Leslie Milroy meant by “Real English” (1993).

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Glossary of Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Terminology

Introduction

As an introduction to this glossary, it is useful to clarify what is meant in this book by the term **language**, and equally what is not intended by it. Because the question is complex and contested, I have not treated it as a separate entry but instead address it here as a preliminary discussion. This clarification is particularly important because the issue lies at the heart of the approach adopted in the present study of Benjamin Franklin's idealized vision of English.

Oddly, no universally accepted definition of *language* exists. Even institutions such as UNESCO have avoided proposing an official definition. This partly explains why their estimates of the number of languages in the world vary widely, ranging between about 6,000 and 7,500 depending on the method of classification adopted.

Because they are often oriented towards theoretical linguistics of one school or other, standard reference works do not contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of "language," at least for our purposes. For example, *The Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Matthew, 1997) distinguishes between levels of language: "1. A language in the ordinary sense: e.g. English or Japanese, Opp. Dialect, also as in ordinary usage. 2. The phenomenon of vocal and written communication among human beings generally, again in ordinary usage. Thus, the subject-matter of linguistics includes both language as a general property of our species (sense 2) and particular languages (sense 1)."

Another example is R. L. Trask's *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics* in which he distinguishes between "natural languages" and "formal languages" (i.e. theoretical or constructed systems) (Trask, 1996, 178). His definition of natural language is most pertinent for our purposes: "Any language which is, or once was, the mother tongue of a group of human beings 2. By extension, any conceivable language which is consistent with the requirement of the theory of grammar, and which might in principle be such a mother tongue." This definition raises an obvious difficulty – the reasoning is circular.

What constitutes a *mother tongue*? *Language* derives ultimately from French *langage*, the root of which is *langue*, also meaning “tongue,” so that “mother tongue” (*langue maternelle*) simply restates the original concept rather than clarifying it. Such definitions are therefore too imprecise for the purposes of the present study.

In agreement with Shorrocks (1998), with whom I discussed this issue in 1998¹ and again in 2000, I believe it is more productive to begin by considering the speech of the individual speaker, the **idiolect**, rather than advancing abstract definitions. Although it is viewed in a different theoretical context, this view is also shared by Antoine Culioli (1999) in the framework of his *Théorie des opérations énonciatives* which is founded on what he calls a “speaker-centered approach.”

The **idiolect** is thus a personal linguistic system comprised of a unique mix of phonological, grammatical, syntactic, and lexical components. Every speaker’s idiolect is shaped not only by the person’s culture, which conditions their world view, but also by the range of social institutions in which they interact with others. Invariably, some of the institutions are **paritary** and egalitarian, while others are more **disparitary** and hierarchical. The bottom line is that speakers interacting within the same institutions develop similar idiolects. Having said that, it is vital to point out that no two idiolects are ever identical, not even within a single family.

Seen from another perspective, Lesley Milroy (1980, 1982) has shown that speakers sharing similar social environments and idiolects tend to gather in social groupings or **clusters**, which are embedded within larger social **networks** both of which coalesce into distinct **speech communities**. This contributes to the development of common codes of linguistic evaluation, a process which can be better understood when taking into account Giles’ CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory).² Labov’s concepts of **covert** and **overt prestige** also fit in nicely here.

When Noam Chomsky discussed native speaker “intuitions” regarding grammatical “well-formedness,” he was no doubt thinking of individuals within a specific speech community composed of GA/Standard American English speakers (Chomsky, 1965). The problem with his approach is the narrowness of this vision. Intuitions about grammatical appropriateness are only applicable when the individual is evaluating members of his own speech community who share the same codes of evaluation. When one takes into the consideration the entire spectrum of registers and varieties of a given “language,” this is where one runs into trouble. What would have been the “intuition” of the phonetician

1 I wish to stress to the reader that I am certainly not implying that I had any influence on Graham Shorrocks’ definition of language. When we met, we were simply struck by the similarity of our views (cf. Shorrocks, 1998, 31-46).

2 This is my interpretation of their concepts.

Daniel Jones, a professor at the University College of London during the first half of the 20th century, upon hearing a Lancashire barber who told him [ˈkɛːɹ̩ ðɪ ˈdɛːn ən əl ˈpaʊ ðɪ ˈjæːɹ̩], literally, “Cower thee down (i.e. sit down), and I’ll pow (cut) thy hair”?³ This particular dialect speech was very much alive before the Second World War. Would Jones have even understood him? As social interaction expands across social institutions, linguistic variation increases, especially as one descends the social ladder (cf. **basilects/badumes** below).

A **dialect** (or **variety**, see below for more discussion) may be understood to be a broad set of closely related idiolects spoken in an array of institutions (each with a range of **registers** of their own) that encompass both a vertical social axis and a horizontal geographical axis. In both cases, languages, like dialects, are structured along **continua** rather than being separated by sharply marked linguistic borders or frontiers. This explains why it is difficult to determine where one begins and the other ends.

This perspective also explains the analogy I drew in the Front Matter between language and pointillism. Each individual idiolect may be compared to a single point in a much larger painting that is composed of hundreds, thousands, or even millions of points, each having a slightly different shade of colour. When viewed up close, the painting appears as a confusing multitude of discrete, disconnected dots whereas, when viewed from a distance, these same points merge into a coherent image. From a linguistic perspective, this is how I understand what is commonly called a *language*.

Importantly, no single speaker can ever possess or master his/her *language*, only small, albeit perfectly structured, portions of it. Once again, this depends on each individual’s position along a vertical social continuum and a horizontal geographical continuum, not to mention an affective axis (i.e. one’s emotional or affective attachment to one’s variety). This linguistic variation is further shaped by complex social and cultural factors, including identity, ethnicity, religion, **peoplehood** and, by extension, nationhood (Edward, 1985; Fishman, 1992). In this sense, language functions as an abstract umbrella term encompassing both linguistic and extra-linguistic elements.

In their book *Dialectology*, Chambers and Trudgill (1980, 1998) offer a particularly useful discussion of several popular beliefs about what constitutes a language. Three criteria are frequently evoked:

1. A language is a collection of mutually intelligible varieties.
2. A language possesses a written form, a literature. The “real” language is the codified standard grammar. Variants of it are thus “incorrect,” deviations of a model.

3 I heard this only a few decades ago (Deane, Lancashire).

3. A language must be officially recognized by a governmental or national institution.

Each of these criteria proves problematical, however, and the authors systematically reveal the contradictions of such a view. The first assumes that dialects belonging to the same “language” are mutually intelligible where, in reality, this is not necessarily the case. For example, Cantonese and Mandarin are frequently described as dialects of Chinese, yet speakers of these varieties cannot understand one another without prior learning.

Conversely, speakers of certain dialects of German and Dutch understand each other relatively well along the **dialect continuum** that stretches across the Low Countries and western Germany. So where does German end and Dutch begin? Similar patterns occur in Scandinavia, where speakers of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish can often communicate with each other without great difficulty. If mutual intelligibility is the defining criterion of a “language,” then Danish, Swedish and Norwegian might reasonably be considered varieties of a “Scandinavian” language. Yet the speakers consider each of these as distinct languages, thus reflecting historical, political and cultural considerations rather than purely linguistic ones.

The second criterion – that a language must possess a written form or a literature – is also easily refuted. Writing systems are relatively recent cultural inventions (Proto-Sinaitic script, 1800-1500 BC). In this sense, Franklin’s RMS was just one attempt in a long line of efforts to accurately convert words into writing. The significance of this is that human languages existed as uniquely oral systems for tens of thousands of years before writing ever emerged. Even today, many of the world’s languages have never developed standardized writing system or have only recently acquired one. Numerous indigenous languages of the Americas, for example, developed orthographies only in the last century. Does this make them “non-languages” or “dialects” and, if so, dialects of what? The most appropriate and neutral term might be “**idiom**” in such ambiguous cases (Le Dù and Le Berre, 2019).

The third criterion, namely, the idea that a language must be officially recognized by a state, is likewise flawed. Many languages lack official recognition despite having long-standing speech communities. One example is France where, historically, Basque, Breton and Occitan have never been officially recognized by the French government (either before or since the Revolution), despite the fact that they have centuries-old written traditions and their speakers have distinct cultural and ethnic identities reaching back well over a millennium (even more so for the Basques). Regardless, French remains the sole language of the state. This illustrates how political and ideological forces can marginalize minority linguistic communities.

Conversely, in 2025, the Scottish Parliament recognized Scots as one of Scotland's official languages, alongside Scottish Gaelic. Formerly considered by many to be a corrupt dialect, this is yet another example of how political and ideological decisions determine the frontiers between language and dialect/variety and also how artificial these distinctions are from a purely linguistic perspective. Does a parliamentary decree make Scots any more coherent phonologically, grammatically or lexically than it was previously?

In the end, the concept of language often carries implicit associations of prestige that *varieties/dialects* or *patois*, do not possess.⁴ As we have seen throughout this book, Standard English and Received Pronunciation (RP) has been widely viewed to be *the* model of linguistic correctness and qualifications such as “pure” and “beautiful” are often attributed to it (Giles, 1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1973a, 1973b, 1973c). On the other hand, regional dialects of Britain, but also American English as a whole (whether standard or non-standard), have often been described by prescriptive-minded English people as debased forms of English that have drifted away from the RP/standard model. As we have seen in this book, these so-called debased dialects are often historically more conservative, preserving phonological, grammatical or lexical features that disappeared from the standard language centuries ago. Ample evidence of this has been presented throughout this book. However, it is important to point out that dialectologists have often fallen into excesses of another kind, namely, by vaunting the linguistic “purity” of dialects in accordance with their degree of historical conservatism.

Although Chambers and Trudgill continue to use the term *dialect*, they suggest that the more neutral term *variety* is often preferable. They also emphasize that what is commonly regarded as Standard or Received Pronunciation English is perhaps better understood as a “super dialect”, simply because it is a socially privileged variety that has acquired exceptional prestige through its historical association with powerful political, educational, and cultural institutions rather than through any inherent linguistic superiority. This observation illustrates a broader point: while the boundaries drawn between languages and dialects are largely social and historical constructs, the linguistic systems themselves remain real and internally coherent.

These authors also stress that all the world's languages and dialects are “equal”, a view with which I fully agree. I would, however, formulate this principle somewhat differently. From a strictly linguistic perspective, all languages are systemically equal: each constitutes a fully functional system capable of meeting the communicative needs of its speakers within particular

4 Recall that, during the 16th century, there were those that complained that “English had no grammar!” This is a clear sign that speakers were not yet sure that English deserved to be considered a full-fledged language with the same legitimacy of Latin or Greek.

cultural, social and physical environments. Difficulties arise not from linguistic drawbacks or limitations but rather when speakers of marginalized languages or varieties are excluded from full participation in the economic, political, and intellectual institutions that shape national life – institutions that are often dominated by speakers of a prestigious standard variety (cf. **diglossia**). For this reason, their language or variety may not develop the same specialized registers or technical vocabularies associated with those influential domains. A well-known historical example is English itself, which for several centuries after the Norman Conquest functioned as a **low** variety in relation to Anglo-Norman French and Latin. Differences of this kind are, once again, sociopolitical rather than linguistic.

This observation brings us full circle to the discussion in Chapter 1 about the sociolinguistic implications of the *scala naturae*, or Great Chain of Being. Franklin's RMS was conceived precisely as an attempt to break these linguistic chains of exclusion.

To summarize, in this study, a *language* is best understood not as a single homogeneous system of the kind proposed by Chomsky (1965), but rather as an abstract sociocultural construct emerging from multifarious concentrations of idiolects and dialects that are structured along infinitely subtle social and geographic continua.

acrolect – a term borrowed from creolistics, where it normally denotes the most socially prestigious variety within a post-creole continuum, typically the variety closest to the lexifier standard. In this book, the term is extended to multidialectal communities in medieval England to refer to the most socially prestigious varieties, namely, Anglo-Norman French (the “high” secular language and Latin, the high ecclesiastical standard).

affective proximity – the emotional attachment speakers feel toward their own linguistic variety, whether prestigious or stigmatized, arising from overt prestige, covert prestige or cultural identity. In this book, the concept is closely linked to Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which analyzes how social and emotional factors determine speech convergence and divergence. Also cf. François Chevillet's *axe affectif* or “affective axis” (1991).

allophone – a phonetic variant of a phoneme; that is, one of several non-contrastive pronunciations of the same phoneme which do not result in a difference in lexical meaning.

Although allophones do not distinguish meaning, they may carry sociolinguistic information such as regional identity, social affiliation or prestige. For example, speakers may identify a Scottish or Welsh speaker by the realization of the phoneme /r/ as an alveolar trill [r] in the word *right*, whereas many speakers

of southern English varieties realize /r/ as an alveolar approximant [ɹ] or, in areas of the southwest of England, a retroflex approximant [ɻ]. In all cases, the meaning of the word remains unchanged (see *phoneme*).

a-prefixing – a morphosyntactic feature historically characteristic of southern and Midland varieties of English, and today most strongly associated with southern American English, particularly Appalachian English. Diachronically, a-prefixing derives from OE morphology, especially *on-/in-* + *-ande/-inde*. In present-day English, it survives as a reduced prefix *a-* attached to certain verbal *-ing* forms, as in *They went a-hunting*. It is also used in verbal morphology to express the past participial: *The bearskin was a-stretched out*. Historically, this *a-*prefix is a reduced form of OE *ge-* (+ past participle). Historically, both types of *a-*prefixing were widespread throughout colonial English, including New England, as evidenced by literary sources such as Lowell's *Biglow Papers* (1848).

badume – A highly fragmented, purely oral, socially stigmatized micro-dialect, comparable to the Breton (Brittonic-Celtic) varieties of modern western Brittany. Similar micro-dialects once existed in Old English (cf. Vulgar Old English), Middle English and Early Modern English and, some would argue, persisted until recent decades. The term comes from Tregor and Cornouaillais Breton *ba du-mañ*, meaning “round here” or “in our area.” When asked how a word or phrase is said, a Breton dialect speaker often responds: “*Ba du-me ve lâret X pe Y*” – “Round here (i.e., in our parish or home region) we say X or Y.” The concept conveys both local linguistic identity, the consciousness that variation exists all around them, and social solidarity, aligning with what this book calls a “paritary” variety or register. For English-speaking sociolinguists, the term *basilect* is used here as a convenient equivalent, capturing the full meaning of *badume*.

basilect – like “acrolect,” this is another term borrowed from creolistics describing the most stigmatized levels of a creole language. For the reasons just explained, I have used it with the meaning of “badume.” In the context of our discussion, it refers here to the highly unstable, stigmatized versions of “vulgar” Middle English and Early Modern English varieties of England and colonial America (for instance, by indentured servants).

bel usage – literally “beautiful usage,” Gendron (2009) uses this term to refer to a register of Francien French spoken by the 17th- and 18th-century aristocracy. Characterized by elegance, refinement, and rhetorical effect, it was the preferred style of the Parisian *salons*. Contrary to expectations, it was grammatically and stylistically noted for its simplicity and directness. *Bel usage* is contrasted with *grand usage*, used by lawyers and clergy, and *bon usage*, which emphasized strict grammatical correctness. He argued the influence of this register in the foundation of Québécois French which preserves numerous aspects of its lexicon

and phonology, for instance, *fret* rather than *froid*, [wɛ] rather than [wa], etc.

Bioprogram Language Theory (BLT) – a theory in creole linguistics proposed by Derek Bickerton to account for the structural similarities observed across creole languages, despite differences in their lexifier languages (e.g. English, French, Dutch). The theory holds that creole languages develop out of pidgins – grammatically reduced systems of communication arising in multilingual contact situations. Because humans are biologically “hardwired” with an innate capacity for language acquisition (drawing on Chomskyan ideas of Universal Grammar), there exists a limited set of grammatical structures available for building a fully functional language. According to BLT, it is primarily the children in pidgin-speaking communities the missing grammatical structure, transforming pidgins into fully developed creole languages with coherent phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon.

In this study, the concept is extended to the linguistic situation of 17th- and 18th-century colonial America, where speakers of diverse English regional dialects were brought together in shared settlement communities. Here, communication strategies were streamlined through a combination of dialect contact, the *sharedness principle* (see below), and the structuring role played by children and adolescents of the founder generations.

breaking – in this book, “breaking” refers primarily to a feature current throughout the American South today. This phenomenon has its origins in 17th-century southern England where Middle English short vowels (which were generally tense in quality, not lax) were lengthened (cf. Katherine Philips, 1632, Chapter 17). These lengthened vowels (corresponding to RP/GA lax vowels) were extended to a point that provoked a phonetic split, that is, the introduction of a glide in the middle of the vowel: [heːjɪd] for “head”, [bæːjɪd] for “bad”, [siːjɪn ~ sɪːjɪn] for “sin”... It is closely linked to “drawling,” a characteristic once associated with New England rustic speech and strongly condemned by both Franklin and Webster (see *off-glide*). We saw spellings of “ear” spelt *eyer* or *ayer* in the 17th-century Hempstead town records of New York suggesting pronunciations such as [ɛjəɹ] or [æjəɹ].

bridge vowels – Shorrocks (1998) describes these as a “continuous run of variants” which could also be called “transition vowels.” In multidialectal contact situations of the same language, it is extremely difficult determine the “phonemic” boundaries separating these strings of vowels for one important reason. Despite significant overlapping between them, dialects function as individual linguistic systems which, by extension, reflect separate social histories. In such situations, depending on the dialect systems involved, the same vowel can belong to two different phonemes. This is why the notion of

“bridge” or “transition” vowels is so important, because they are at the heart of vowel shifts.

chain shift – a “chain shift” results from interdependent phonetic changes by which a bridge vowel of a given social or geographic variety occupies the space of an adjacent phoneme. This can potentially blur phonemic boundaries between varieties. Such shifts can trigger multiple sound changes and result in the reconfiguration of phonemic contrasts.

There are two types of chain shifts, a “push chain” and a “pull chain.” A “push chain,” in which one sound or “phone” displaces another, and a pull chain, in which a sound moves to fill a phonetic or phonemic gap.

The *pin-pen* merger, a phenomenon with deep roots in southern England, causes the pronunciation of “pen” [pen] to shift to “pin” [pm]. In 17th-century Suffolk and in the London area more generally, the opposite shift occurred with “bill” shifting to [bɛl] and “hill” to [hɛl]... These interdependent changes illustrate the difficulty of defining a single “English” phonemic system in the context of dialectal and social variation (cf. *phonetic range*).

Chancery English – traditionally considered the variety of written English used by the English royal Chancery in 15th-century London, and often credited with helping to regularize English spelling, grammar and vocabulary, thereby influencing the development of Standard Modern English. We have noted Laura Wright’s criticisms of this hypothesis (Wright, 2001, 2-3; Chapter 10). While Chancery English played a crucial role in elaborating the standard, I argue that the full range of social and economic institutions – such as butchers, cattle merchants, dyers, soldiers, etc. – each contributed their own idioms and practices. The clergy contributed significantly to this linguistic picture. It was the convergence of all these idioms that shaped the social varieties that ultimately formed London English. At the paritary level, London English itself underwent a creole-like coalescence of varieties. In fact, it was likely the contact between these diverse linguistic varieties from around the country and home counties, and the linguistic melding resulting from it, that provoked many of the innovations observed in 18th-century London distinguishing it from the more conservative varieties of English spoken in the rest of England.

clitic – a generic term (related to enclitic) for any bound morpheme (i.e. it cannot stand alone) and must be tied phonologically to a host word. Clitics are morphologically dependent and grammatically functional.

cluster – a small group of speakers communicating in a restricted social environment (limited to family, neighbourhood and close-knit social or work-related institutions). Socially bound together within a larger population, their speech often shares usage or social variables (e.g., similar vowel or consonant

realizations) (see **network** and **speech community**). This ties in well with Le Dû and Le Berre's concept of the bonds between "idiom" and "institution" (see below).

code-mixing – the use of linguistic elements (such as words, phrases, idioms) from two or more languages or varieties of the same language within a single sentence. This most often within intimate and affective social settings (among family, close friends, neighbours) who also share the same multilingual or multidialectal culture. The effect is a blending of codes into one such as "*I can't believe it! Tu sais ce qu'il m'a dit, that idiot?*"

code-switching – the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties within the same conversation, but not the same sentence (i.e. **code-mixing**). Both are frequent in paritary contexts among bilingual or bidialectal speakers within the same "cluster" or "institution(s)" and who share the same codes of linguistic evaluation.

codification – coined by Peter Trudgill, this is generally described as an authoritative act imposed by a governing institution by which formal linguistic rules (i.e. a norm, standard or practice) are imposed on a target group. It can be in the form of grammars, dictionaries, spelling guides. In law, or other professional institutions (legal codes, statutes, technical guides) (cf. *grand usage*). Franklin's *Reformed Mode of Spelling* was an overt attempt at codifying pronunciation as a general practice across Great Britain and the British Empire, not only North America. His RMS model was an attempt to codify what he imagined to be the most sophisticated register of London English.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) – a sociolinguistic theory developed by Howard Giles that explains how speakers adjust their speech and communicative behaviour in interaction. Speakers may converge toward the style of their interlocutors to signal solidarity or gain social acceptance, or diverge to emphasize social distance, assert authority or convey superiority. Similarly, speakers of a stigmatized variety or language may diverge from their home language as a strategy to align with a higher-status group.

continuum – normally called a "dialect continuum." In this book, the notion of a dialect continuum functions along two axes: geographical and social. It is most often used in connection with a geographical continuum referring to linguistic changes (phonological, morphological, grammatical, syntactical, lexical...) along a given geographical route. It is highly significant in our discussions given that these kinds of low status varieties or "low" varieties were dominant throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland during the colonial period (see **dialect**). It is most relevant when applied to highly variable, fragmented, "broad" dialects

that we have defined as **basilects/badumes**.

The idea is that as one travels from point A to point B, linguistic differences may be observable but minimal. As one reaches point C and D an increasing number of differences are observable. By the time one reaches point H, the differences between it and point A may be so significant that serious difficulties of comprehension can emerge. Generally, there are no clear linguistic lines where one dialect begins and another stops or even one dialect stops and another language begins. An example of a geographical continuum is seen between Dutch and German dialects. Where does the Dutch “language” end and German “language” begin? The same is true for Gascon (Occitan) > Catalan > Aragonese, both transitional varieties, and Spanish (Castilian). Again, this raises the sticky question of the difference between “dialect” and “language.” Note that even the UN, in its studies of the world’s language, has been unable to differentiate the two and, for this reason, cannot calculate the exact number of “languages” in the world.

The concept can also be applied to a social continuum, the idea that a language varies in terms of social prestige and acceptability. Based on the way an individual speaks, one can often identify not only the geographical origins of the speaker, but also where that person is situated on the vertical social axis. Here we have seen this is a relic of the Great Chain of Being (cf. Chapter 1). The lower on the social scale, the less acceptable (and non-standard) the language generally tends to be (i.e. low language). The higher one goes up the social ladder, the more appropriate (and standard) the language is viewed (i.e. “high” language), (cf. **diglossia**).

contoid – a term introduced by Kenneth Pike (1943) to distinguish certain speech sounds from traditional consonants. Contoids are produced with significant constriction, such as the syllabic [ŋ] or [l], in contrast to their non-syllabic counterparts [n] and [l]. While the IPA classifies these sounds as consonants, the use of the syllabic diacritic [̥] by the IPA acknowledges their distinct articulatory properties. Pike also challenged the classification of [w], [j], and [ɹ] as consonants, identifying them instead as **vocoids** (see below). Remarkably, John Hart, in his *Orthographie* (1569), designed a specific character for syllabic [l] (cf. Chapter 13) as well as syllabic [r] because he considered they differed phonologically (he didn’t use this term) from /l/ and /r/.

convergence – a communicative strategy (cf. **Communication Accommodation Theory**) in which a speaker adapts their speech or behaviour toward that of an interlocutor, typically to signal solidarity, reduce social distance or gain approval and acceptance.

couche sociale – literally “social layer,” a term preferred by some French

sociologists as more relevant than “social class” for analysing contemporary Western societies. While sociolinguists such as Labov maintain class distinctions (e.g., three levels in NYC), others, like Trudgill, recognize finer gradations (MMC, LMC, HWC, MWC, LWC). I treat this vertical sociolinguistic axis as a continuing legacy of hierarchical social stratification, reminiscent of the Great Chain of Being (cf. Chapter 10).

covert prestige – is a term used by William Labov to describe the social value or respect that a non-standard or stigmatized speech variety holds within a particular speech community (cluster or network), even though it is viewed as substandard by the dominant social group.

diachronic linguistics – the study of how languages change over time, including changes in phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. It examines the internal development of a language, often using historical documents, but is distinct from historical linguistics, which typically also involves comparing related languages to reconstruct earlier stages (cf. *Historical linguistics* below).

dialect – in this book, I use *dialect* and *variety* as synonyms. However, Chambers and Trudgill (1998) distinguish the two, noting that *variety* is neutral whereas *dialect* has historically been perceived as inferior to “language” (see Chapter 10). They emphasize that all dialects are linguistically and systemically equal to the RP/English standard. The difference between lies in the fact that its codification and institutional support: the standard, through refinement and formalization in legal, medical, and administrative contexts, becomes what they term a “super-dialect” (cf. idiom, patois, register).

Similarly, in the framework of this book, dialect, variety, *badume*/basilect, patois are all viewed to be linguistically equal systemically, if not socially. A “standard language” corresponds to “language” in the popular mind and, in this respect, is thus merely a cover term for a “dialect” which has been officially recognized and linguistically codified to function as the prestigious representative “norm” of a political entity such as a nation, nation state or state.

dialect mixture – a term preferred to koineization by Trudgill (2008) and Mufwene (2008). I define dialect mixture as a generic word referring to the blending of diverse dialects (including codified varieties) of the same language. This often results from contacts within colonial settings of the kind studied in this book. I consider this to be an important component of the koineization process, but it is too general and certainly not an adequate term to replace koineization which, on the contrary, refers to a long, complex, multi-stage process (cf. **koineization** below).

diglossia – a sociolinguistic situation in which two distinct language varieties

coexist within a single speech community, with a high variety (H) used in formal, literary, official, or educational contexts, and a low variety (L) used in everyday speech. The term was coined by Charles Ferguson (1959), who applied it to Arabic, distinguishing Classical Arabic (H) from the less prestigious Arabic vernaculars (L).

This concept has been extended to applied to situations where the high variety and low varieties belong to separate languages, as was the case in medieval England when Norman-French was spoken by “heie men” and English dialects by “lowe men,” as reported by Robert of Gloucester, and reflected in William Caxton’s 15th-century description of low-prestige English dialect speakers were referred to as “rude vplondyssh men” (*Eneydos*, 1490, chapter 10).

disparitary register – from the French *disparitaire*, referring to a high, formal register used in solemn or official contexts (cf. the “norm” below). It conveys social and emotional distance or coldness, often highlighting a speaker’s perceived superiority over a lower-status interlocutor. Functionally, it is a model often associated with “divergence” (Giles & Ogay, 2007; Le Dù & Le Berre, 2019).

divergence – a communicative strategy (cf. CAT) in which a speaker accentuates linguistic or social differences to assert social identity and mark group boundaries. This can occur within a cluster or network sharing an idiom of covert prestige—for example, South Welsh dock workers from Casnewydd might exaggerate their Welsh accents when speaking to an RP-speaking engineer, or a bank official might amplify a disparitary RP register when denying a loan to a woman with a strong regional accent. These examples, while caricatured, reflect sociolinguistic experiments by Howard Giles (1972, 1973, 1978, 1980).

drawling – the elongation of vowels that are normally short and lax in GA and RP English, and short and “tense” in ME, drawling characterized rural speech in colonial America, including New England. In the US South, it often results in “breaking” (cf. off-glides) and the elongated vowels create the impression of slower speech. Historically, this feature originates in southeastern England, particularly London and home counties, where formerly tense EME short vowels in stressed syllables were lengthened – a pattern observable in the rhymes of 17th-century poets such as Katherine Philips (1632, cf. Chapter 16). Drawling, therefore, is of English origin and formed part of the American colonial feature pool. It was, however, vigorously condemned by both Franklin and Webster (cf. Chapter 17). There are indications that breaking also could be heard in 17th-century England and would not necessarily be an American innovation.

ecclesiastical standard – to be understood by their *badume*-speaking congregations, medieval English clergymen adapted their spoken English to local varieties. It is likely that, initially, they drew on the inter-dialects of rural market

towns as models. Le Dû and Le Berre (2019) describe a similar development in Breton-speaking Brittany during the early modern period. Since the goal was to teach God's word, a lofty idiom was needed, both to convey abstract theological concepts and to impress and inspire parishioners. The resulting disparitary literary model that arose are exemplified by texts such as Gaytryge's *Lay Folks Catechism* (1357) and Wycliffe's English Bible translation (1381), which laid the foundations for subsequent Bible translations, culminating in the King James Bible (1611) which remained the ecclesiastical standard until the late 20th century. Chapter 10 illustrates this with Elder Millard Pruitt's spontaneous 1973 sermon in North Carolina, delivered in an idiom clearly influenced by the ecclesiastical standard. Similarly, Franklin demonstrated the ability to shift seamlessly between codes in his writings.

As the church trained clerics who taught literacy to laypeople, the ecclesiastical standard naturally established the core elements of codification and standardization that later influenced secular English.

enclitic – a morpheme, typically functioning as a pronoun, auxiliary verb or particle, that is attached to the beginning or end of a word. In standard English, the contraction *I'll* [aɪl] illustrates this: the <'ll> [l] is a postfixed enclitic representing *shall* or *will*. In southwestern English dialects, *I* (< OE *Ic*) was pronounced [ɪtʃ] or [ʌtʃ ~ ɹtʃ] in areas of Devon and Somerset during EME period and until now, so *I will* could be realized as [tʃɪl], with [tʃ] functioning as a postfixed enclitic representing *I*. Similarly, the Middle English verbal enclitic *-se* for *shall* appears in Shakespeare's spelling *Ice* [əɪs ~ eɪs], meaning "I shall." A modern dialect example I recorded in Deane, Bolton, is [as bɪ 'gɪm 'ne:], "I shall be going now" showing [as] functioning as the enclitic *I shall*.

feature pool – the collection of competing dialect features present within a given colonial settlement. Some features were prestigious, linked to the rising standard mesolect spoken by the most literate members of society and thus preserved in writing, while others were less prestigious or stigmatized, confined to specific idioms and institutions. Their absence from writing does not imply disappearance. A key example examined in Part III is the "New England short o" (Chapters 21 and 22). Imported from the Midlands and eastern England, it was an integral part of Franklin's native phonemic inventory. By the late 19th century, it was stigmatized and, by the 1970s, largely recessive (Avis, 1971). The sharedness principle played a crucial role in determining which features were retained or discarded during the koineization process.

fixed pronunciation – a term used by Samuel Johnson to critique Thomas Sheridan's proposal for a pronunciation dictionary. Johnson argued that a single, "fixed" pronunciation could not be imposed on English speakers due

to the immense diversity of dialects, noting that even among England's elite, opinions differed: Lord Yonge, considered the finest speaker in the Commons, pronounced *great* [gɹi:t], while Lord Chesterfield, the leading voice in the House of Lords, insisted on [gɹɛ:t], and an Irishman would say [gɹɛit] – the latter being the form that survives in modern RP/GA (Bowen, 1905, 545). Polly Stevenson, in her September 26, 1768 letter to Franklin, similarly doubted that English pronunciation could ever be “fix'd.” Franklin, however, may have entertained the idea as feasible because his New England's variety was relatively unified, making the diversity of English dialects seem a surmountable obstacle.

founder generation principle – coined by Salikoko Mufwene, this term refers to the idea that the first group of settlers in a colony establishes not only the cultural but also the linguistic foundations of the community. Later arrivals adapt their speech to these established norms, a process largely explained by Communication Accommodation Theory (cf. Chapter 11). Connections to Bickerton's Bioprogram Language Theory are discussed in Chapter 12.

General American – contrary to the RP English accent, General American is precisely that, and is used by the vast majority of Americans today with minor variations. Unlike RP it is not associated with a social elite and should not be confused with “standard American English,” which relates to grammar. One's command of standard grammar is a criterion for social judgement, however. General American (GA) is sometimes referred to as a “neutral” American accent and is most associated with the variety of American English spoken within a region Hans Kurath called the “Midland fan,” also known as the “General American fan.” Very broadly speaking, at its narrowest point, this fan extends westward, from Midland America. Starting in western Pennsylvania and Ohio, it spreads south-westwardly through New Mexico, Arizona as far as the southern California coast. It stretches north-westwardly to the to Oregon, Washington and Alaska. Nor is it strictly “American” because a nearly identical form of it is spoken throughout much of Canada starting with western Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

Until recently, General American generally excluded marked varieties that were most common along the entire North American seaboard from the Maritime provinces of Canada and New England down to Florida. Throughout this entire region distinct regional accents and grammatical varieties were spoken. Nor was it heard in the southern states, that is, the region once called “Dixie” (i.e. the former Confederacy) or the Appalachians and the southwestern states of Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas. Of course, General American is heard in all of the major towns and cities of these regions today and is spreading. It is also virtually the only accent heard in the North American media. However, it does not have nearly the same level of overt prestige as RP/standard English.

grand usage – when discussing the development of the Québécois koine, Gendron (2009) uses the term *grand usage* to refer to the highly codified, formal (disparitary) register of French spoken by the clergy (ecclesiastical standard) and highly formal, technical “idiom” of lawyers that characterizes legal “institutions.” It was considered superior to the *bel usage*, which emphasized aesthetic elegance rather than conciseness and technical precision. In pre-revolutionary France, the *grand usage* resembled what we might call “double speak” today, and was characterized by a highly specialized vocabulary inaccessible to non-initiates (cf. differentiation; CAT). Its socially authoritative and linguistically codified functions contributed to the development of modern standard French. Gendron highlights the role of both *grand usage* and *bel usage* in the koineization of Québécois French.

Great Vowel Shift – coined by Otto Jespersen in 1909 in *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles*, the Great Vowel Shift (GVS) describes the raising of Middle English long vowels between roughly 1450 and 1800. While Jespersen’s work is highly influential, the GVS primarily applies to the development of Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) English. Many English varieties, particularly in northern England and Scotland, were only marginally affected: for example, Lancashire [bɹi:t] and Doric [brɪxt] “bright,” northern English and Scots [mak] “make,” and Lincolnshire [mu:θ ~ mæiθ] “mouth.” In this sense, the GVS can be seen as an unconscious reflection of Milroy’s “standard ideology,” as non-standard varieties have been overlooked by linguists who, like all literate, standard speakers, have been conditioned by prescriptive views. Hence, their own sense of “overt prestige” blinds them as to the value of these non-standard English varieties.

high language – see **diglossia**

historical linguistics – the study of the historical development of languages, including the reconstruction of ancestor languages and the examination of relationships among languages. It traces how languages evolve over time, such as the development of English from Old English through Germanic roots to Proto-Indo-European. The focus is on understanding the history and interconnections of languages, and it can include applications such as historical phonology, morphology and syntax. A narrow application of historical linguistics, restricted here to historical phonology, is Mazarin’s identification of four overlapping phases of the evolution of English (A, B1, B2, C1, C2, D) (Mazarin, 2020).

idiom (see also **institution**) – an idiom is a generic term for any form of language – whether a variety or register that is used within a particular institution (Le Dû and Le Berre prefer the term “register” to variety). At the macro-level, it can refer to the unified, officially sanctioned, disparitary, codified norm of a nation-

state. At the micro-level, it denotes language use within a localized social or professional group, such as a family, a fishing-boat crew, a team of carpenters, agricultural workers of a given parish, or a medical team in a community hospital.

Members of an institution adopt a specific “idiom,” which Le Dû and Le Berre define as “any form of speech which is judged by its members... to be an appropriate vehicle for communication and which they feel to be suitable for the functions of that particular institution. Each institution has its corresponding idiom and, conversely, no idiom can exist without a corresponding institution” (2019). In other words, “idioms” and “institutions” are inseparable: one cannot exist without the other.

imperfect rhymes – in Chapter 15, I identified a number of rhymes that appear “imperfect” to modern RP or General American speakers, such as *way ~ sea, seen ~ brain, bear ~ dear, rather ~ together*, and, involving back vowels, *cost ~ coast, God ~ blood, wood ~ flood, road ~ rod, love ~ prove*, among others. While the first group can be accounted for quite easily on historical grounds, the second group, involving back vowels, presents a considerably greater challenge; this motivates the detailed discussion in Chapters 20, 21 and 22. These so-called “imperfect” rhymes were in fact either fully perfect, or at least near-perfect, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moreover, they are attested not only in the poetry of New England writers such as Franklin, Barlow and Dwight, but also in that of English poets including Dryden, Pope, Herrick and others, another example of continuity.

institution – Le Dû and Le Berre’s sociolinguistic model is built on two interrelated concepts: “institution” and “idiom.” They define an institution as “any relatively stable social structure which serves as a framework for human communication and interaction” (Le Dû & Le Berre, 2019, 97-114). Institutions can vary widely in scale. At a micro-level, an institution might be a nuclear family, a fishing boat crew or a group of parish farmer labourers. At a broader level, it can encompass networks within larger social entities, such as the teaching staff of a school or university, a military regiment, or a government ministry.

One strength of linking “institution” and “idiom” is methodological: it allows linguists to define and describe social and linguistic units precisely, a clarity often lacking in the more ambiguous notion of a “speech community.” Furthermore, the institution–idiom framework complements Leslie and James Milroy’s concepts of “cluster” and “network” (L. Milroy, 1980; J. Milroy & J. Harris, 1980; L. Milroy, 1982; L. & J. Milroy, 1993).

inter-dialects – varieties that arose during the Middle Ages in market towns through contact with speakers of surrounding micro-dialects (*badume*-basilectal

speakers). Over decades or even centuries, a process resembling koineization occurred: the English spoken in these towns was not fully stabilized or codified, but speakers developed a sense of what was linguistically acceptable. Mobile individuals in certain professions – cattle merchants, masons, or farmers selling surplus products – were particularly adept at using these inter-dialects, a phenomenon I have observed in Western Brittany. The result was a form of dialect mixture similar to that later observed in the colonies. Because inter-dialects were grammatically and lexically streamlined, they were more generally intelligible than the highly localized parish-level *badumes*. It is likely that ecclesiastical standards ultimately trace their roots to these varieties.

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) – founded by Paul Passy with the assistance of Henry Sweet and Otto Jespersen, the IPA is a standardized system of phonetic symbols representing the sounds (phones) of all spoken languages, providing a consistent way to transcribe pronunciation accurately and unambiguously. In a sense, it is a realization of Francis Lodwick’s dream of “an universal alphabet” (1686).

koine – a koine is a linguistic system or variety that emerges from dialect contact and levelling. Contrary to what has sometimes been argued, this process involves the conscious selection of features by speakers of stigmatized varieties to facilitate communication across diverse groups. In North America, koines developed a bipolar range of registers, from highly disparitary forms (well-documented in written texts) to largely oral, paritary registers, of which few traces survive. At every stage of koineization, social pressures – both from above and below – determine the nature of speakers’ “feature choices” as they actively attempt to shape their own idioms (including in terms of registers and varieties).

koineization – a process in which dialect mixture is a key component, but its long-term outcome is the coalescence and socially-guided blending of dialects into a coherent linguistic system. This process is exemplified in the North American colonies during the first century of settlement during which the first recognizable koines appear. At the parity oral level, the process unfolds in stages:

1. Founder generation – Establishment of an initial feature pool of competing linguistic elements.
2. Input from later incomers – New dialect speakers typically adapt their speech to the established community, often motivated by social, cultural or linguistic assimilation in challenging and hostile environments.
3. Sharedness principle – Adoption of forms most common across all dialect speakers, a form of “feature selection,” whereby speakers consciously

choose specific features from the existing pool in accordance with the social pressures imposed on them from above below.

Depending on the social functions and institutions in which language is used, this leads to bipolar registers, ranging from disparitary to paritary varieties. By the early 18th century, these koines and registers were largely established, entering a stabilization phase marked by dialect levelling, where varieties were further streamlined through the active participation of speakers.

language – see **dialect**

language accommodation – see Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

lax vowels – vowels produced with minimal muscular constriction, typically shorter than their “tense” counterparts. In Early Modern English (EME), vowels now considered lax in GA/RP were more tense, pronounced with greater muscular tension (similar to French /i/) and slightly higher in the mouth. Importantly, tense vowels are not necessarily long, and some lax vowels can be long in certain dialects (e.g., [dɪːd] in southwestern England, Wells (1989). Following this distinction, I consider it useful to describe vowels by quantity (“long” vs “short”) as distinct from quality (“tense” vs “lax”).

levelling – this is often described as the disappearance of distinctive dialectal features in contexts where dialect speakers of the same language cohabit the same social institutions within the same geographical space. In this book, levelling clearly occurred within the colonial settlements of North America. The bottom line is that speakers adopt features of language which are a) most common to all speakers (cf. “sharedness principle”) and b) less regionally and marked or socially stigmatized, hence more prestigious.

Levelling is not the result of a sort of linguistic “natural selection,” as it is sometimes presented. The point I have been making is that, quite the contrary, it is the speakers in the colonial communities studied in this book who consciously and actively decided which features to retain or to reject based on the internal codes of linguistic evaluation that had developed among them over time. Neither is levelling a linear process. The degree to which it occurs depends on the social institutions in which various idioms are used. In institutions favouring paritary idioms (influenced by older *badumes*/basilects), the extent of levelling will be less generally pronounced than in institutions where the prestigious disparitary standard language is promoted. In this last case, such speakers are perceived of less educated members of society as and “more intelligent.” Here we see how one’s command of disparitary language can be used as a tool to wield social power.

We have seen in Chapter 10 that, during the Middle English period and Early Modern English period, contacts between multi-dialectal speakers in the

market towns of Europe resulted in the development of regional inter-dialectal varieties which were marked by considerable streamlining or “levelling,” one result being, for instance, the simplification of verbal morphology, the outcome often resembling creole-like simplifications.

lenition – the voicing of voiceless consonants, typically in intervocalic or external sandhi positions. A common example in American English (and some British and Northern Irish varieties; cf. Chapter 23) is intervocalic /t/, often realized as [t̪] or an apical flap [ɾ] in GA.

lexical set – a term used by John Wells (1988) to describe a class of words that shares the same vowel (typically in RP). His “key words,” *Price, Fleece, Kit, Meat*, etc. were chosen as representative words to identify the category of vowel being discussed. In this book, I have added “key words” to expand the discussion of certain vowels, *girl* or *know/known*, for instance.

low language – see **diglossia**

macro-level dialectology – this refers to the study of language varieties across dialect boundaries.

mesolect – borrowed from creolistics (like *acrolect* and *basilect*), it refers here to the more refined, levelled speech of a growing middle class of literate artisans and merchants during the ME and EME period. It is this disparitary mesolectal variety from eastern England that was formed the basis of the ruling administrative and dissenting ecclesiastical institutions of Massachusetts in the 17th century, of which Franklin’s family were integral members.

micro-level dialectology – as the term implies, this refers to the study of dialects in highly restricted sociolinguistic environments with a special focus on individual speakers of idioms living in tight-knit speech communities (clusters or networks functioning in an array of institutions), often at the parish level.

minimal pairs – a concept used in phonology as early as Sir Thomas Smith *De Recta* (1568) (cf. Fig. 13.1) to demonstrate that two sounds are distinct phonemes in a language (*bid* ~ *bide*, *heal* vs *hell*, etc.). Minimal pairs are essential for identifying phonemic contrast within a single linguistic system. For example, *sit* /bɪt/ vs *seat* /bi:t/ differ only in the contrastive opposition of /ɪ/ vs /i:/ in RP/GA English. However, in Franklin’s day, we have seen that his “protophonemic” RMS system, he does not distinguish between vocalic quality and quantity.

Phonemic distinctions are, as in ME, uniquely between quantitative, for instance, “sin” /sin/ vs “seen” /si:n/ or “did” /did/ vs “deed” /di:d/, etc. Some doubts exist whether, in Franklin’s mind, his /i/ was truly tense (as in French /i/) or whether it was lax /ɪ/ as in modern GA/RP (see **proto-phoneme**). We have

also seen that Franklin (1768) uses the same minimal pairs as the orthoepists John Wallis and John Wilkins, that is, *fall* ~ *folly*, suggesting that he consulted their work. Wilkins, Wallis and Franklin claim the distinction between them is quantitative, leading to the conclusion that it was pronounced /ɒ: ~ ɑ:/, not /ɔ(:)/ as has often been imagined.

multiple negation – grammatical phenomenon common in Old English and Middle English and which, starting in the 15th century, was beginning to become stigmatized in the literary language (Nevalainen, 1998). Multiple negation was avoided early on in the ecclesiastical standards (Wycliffe Bible, Tyndale and King James) but not in the vernacular (Chaucer!) where, even today, it is alive and well, e.g. “He didn’t never do nobody no harm”! It is one of the morphological features of the ME *badumes* that has survived in American dialects, largely as a result of the sharedness principle. I have only noticed two examples in Franklin’s writings.

network – a web of social and sociolinguistic ties linking individual speakers or clusters of speakers. The strength and density of these ties influence how linguistic features are transmitted, maintained or changed. While the concept is analytically useful, its boundaries are often vague. For this reason, the approach favoured in this book is the related concept of “idiom” and its intimate interconnection with “institution” (Le Berre & Le Dù, 2019), which allows for more precise identification grounded in the specific social context of a given sociolinguistic study.

new dialect formation – the process by which a new, stable dialect emerges through prolonged contact between speakers of different dialects or languages. It involves dialect mixture, levelling and selection, resulting in linguistic features that are distinct from those of the original input varieties (see **koineization**, the concept favoured in this book).

norm – following Le Dù and Le Berre (2019, 118-119, 228-230), a linguistic *norm* may be defined as the disparitary register employed by the national administrative apparatus of the modern nation state. It is the idiom designed for use by a centralized, all-encompassing governing institution and is therefore characterized by an exceptionally broad functional range, encompassing the diverse domains administered by the state (administration, justice, health, the economy, education, defence, agriculture and others). This highly prestigious and comprehensive model is codified, transmitted through formal education, and functions as a secular literary “standard” for all formally educated members of society, a process that further reinforces its symbolic authority. From a historical perspective, the emergence of the norm is a relatively recent phenomenon, closely tied to the development of modern state institutions.

off-glide – simply put, an off-glide is the glide that introduces the second element of a diphthong. While some linguists analyse the glide itself as the second element of a diphthong, this last interpretation is misleading within the context of the present framework. In this book, the term is used more specifically to describe the “breaking” of vowels that are normally lax in GA and RP English but longer in modern southern US English. For instance, as in *head* GA /hɛd/ realized as [hɛːɹɪd] in southern US English. As noted elsewhere, some French linguists do not treat glides as components of diphthongs, as seen in forms such as [wa], [ja], [ɛw], or [ej], because they see glides as being closer to consonants. Pike (1943), on the other hand, considers these introductory and final elements to be “vocoids,” hence not true vowels, but certainly not consonants.

onset vowel – in this book, onset vowel is used in reference to the first vocalic element of a diphthong. Some linguists prefer “nucleus,” which I view as inappropriate here since, in some varieties of English (and in other languages), the second element can be the predominant element, e.g. [ɪi:], which I believe triggered the GVS. Another synonym is “on-glide” which I consider misleading because no “glide” is involved.

overt prestige – a term associated with the work of William Labov, referring to the explicitly recognized social prestige attached to a standard or high-status disparitary variety of a language and that reflects the positive social value and pride associated with using or mastering forms that are socially sanctioned as correct, educated or prestigious.

orthoepist – in past centuries, orthoepists were scholars who sought to define and impose what they considered to be “correct” English pronunciation. The model was based on the speech of London-area elites, in particular as used by members of the the Court of England. We saw in Chapter 13 that Sir Thomas Smith (1568) is generally considered to be the first of these.

paritary registers (cf. varieties) – reserved for communication along a horizontal social axis “between equals, people who are similar to ourselves and with whom we share intimate bonds” (Le Dù & Le Berre, 2019, 133). The advantage of this term over, say, “informal,” is that the emphasis is not only on social equality between speakers but also, even if it is not overtly expressed, “**affective proximity**” (cf. Chevillet, 1991), a dimension which I feel has been sorely neglected in sociolinguistics. It is this paritary and affective register that has always been dominant in rural and in working class communities more generally, whether stigmatized or not. This affective dimension of commonality and solidarity is what is at the heart of “covert prestige.” Finally, it is also important to consider that non-standard dialects also have “registers,” levels of language functioning according to the internal rules of the institutions in which

they are used.

peoplehood – a term coined by John Edwards in *Language, Society and Identity* (1985) to denote a shared sense of belonging, affective attachment and collective identity among people who speak the same form of language and share common cultural practices. The emphasis is on shared solidarity and emotional identification grounded in everyday linguistic and social interactions.

peopleness – a related but distinct concept used by Joshua Fishman in his *The Rise and Fall of Ethnicity* (1992). Fishman employs *peopleness* to explain how ethnicity functions as a powerful source of collective identity, rooted in a shared history, language and symbolic practices – often religious in nature – and, crucially, tied to a belief in common biological origins. The term implies not merely group membership but a deeply felt sense of collective existence and historical continuity as a “people.” I have argued elsewhere that this helps explain the intense emotional responses of defenders of minority languages and varieties, who often experience language loss as a form of the ethnic and social extinction of their “family.” In this sense, *peopleness* – and, more broadly, *peoplehood* – may be understood as an extension of the family and kinship model to the level of the wider social group.

phoneme – the minimal distinctive sound unit in a language or variety that permits differences in meaning. In English, /p/ and /b/ function as phonemes, as shown by the minimal pair /pɪg/ vs /bɪg/, where meaning hinges solely on the contrast between a voiceless and a voiced bilabial stop. In this book, however, the concept of the phoneme is applied only within individual varieties that share a single, coherent phonemic system; it cannot be extended across dialects. Claims that there are “44 phonemes in English” typically refer to RP and obscure the fact that a phoneme in RP (or GA) is not necessarily a phoneme in other, non-standard varieties, and vice versa.

A case in point is Shorrocks’ demonstration that the Bolton dialect possesses two mid-front phonemes, /ɛ:/ and /ɛ:/, a distinction absent from RP – yet Lancashire English is uncontroversially English. Similarly, some varieties of Doric Scots preserve the voiceless velar fricative /x/, lost in southern English during the 18th-century (though retained by speakers such as Isaac Newton, d. 1727), and until recently /ŋh/ in <kn-> clusters was still heard in Cumbria. For this reason, when dealing with multidialectal situations, I favour the use of phonetic ranges rather than abstract phonemic inventories within a stabilized variety sharing a coherent phonemic system.

phonetic range – an alternative to the concept of the *phoneme* when dealing with multiple dialects of the same language. Dialects often possess competing phonemic systems that differ not only from RP and GA but also from one another.

Briefly, different dialects can have phonemes that share the same allophones. It is this that provokes vocalic shifting. Paradoxically, despite frequent emphasis on differences between RP and GA, these varieties are far closer to each other than either is to Yorkshire English, South Welsh English, Scots or Appalachian English. In such contexts, significant variation can be expected across many of Wells' lexical sets. In Lincolnshire alone (Chapter 15), *MOUTH* was recorded in the 1960s as [mu:θ], [mæiθ], [meiθ], etc. Asking what the phoneme is in such cases is the wrong question.

pin-pen merger – a vowel merger occurring before nasals with deep historical roots in England that was subsequently exported to the English colonies. Like drawling and vowel breaking, it is often associated with southern US English today; however, abundant evidence from New England and New York town records shows that it was once far more widespread. The merger characterized Benjamin Franklin's native pronunciation – as reflected in spellings such as *git* for “get” and *frind* for “friend” – and that of his uncle Benjamin as well, suggesting that it was also a family characteristic with roots in 17th-century Northamptonshire.

polite speech – a term commonly used in Franklin's lifetime to describe the refined, standard speech of London's high middle class and aristocracy. As with other forms along the vertical social axis, judgements about politeness align with hierarchical positive or negative evaluations of the language spoken at either pole (cf. **vulgar speech**).

prescriptivism – the belief that phonological, morphological, grammatical, syntactic and lexical usage must follow codified rules established by a standard or norm. Adherents evaluate language as “correct” or “incorrect,” “pure” or “impure,” “beautiful” or “ugly” based on conformity to these rules. Benjamin Franklin was a prescriptivist (cf. Chapters 2, 4, 14, Parts IV and V), striving from childhood to master the prescriptive model of his time, particularly Addison and Steele's *Spectator* (vol. 3, 1711). He also mocked non-standard shibboleths in the colonies of Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania (1739, Chapter 14).

proto-phoneme – within Franklin's RMS system, this concept applies to each of his twenty-six characters, including the six he designed himself, reflecting his principle of “one letter for one sound.” Although Franklin had no term for it, his approach demonstrates a clear intuitive understanding of the “phoneme,” a term coined more than a century later by A. Dufriche-Desgenettes (1873) and refined by Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1870s–1890s). His use of minimal pairs—e.g., *fall* ~ *folly*, *sin* ~ *seen*, *did* ~ *deed*, *mem* ~ *maim*—and contrasts such as long high front <ii> vs <i> (IPA /i:/ vs /i/) or long mid front <ee> vs <e> (IPA /ɛ:/ vs

/ɛ/) demonstrates this understanding. The practice of using minimal pairs can be traced back to John Wallis, John Wilkins, and Sir Thomas Smith (1568) (see Fig. 13.1) and, for this reason, we could say that the intuitive understanding of the “phoneme” predates all our modern linguists by centuries. Tanford (2004) makes this same point about Franklin’s intuitive understanding of the existence of molecular and atomic particles.

Received Pronunciation – this term was first coined by Alexander Ellis during the late 19th century and was adopted by the linguists Henry C. Wyld and Daniel Jones. It was used throughout most of the 20th century in reference to the accent heard in the elite public schools (i.e. very private schools!) and universities of England (hence Oxford English). During the 1920s and 30s, it was the only English accent permitted on the BBC radio, which explains the term “BBC English.” The royal family also cultivated this accent and this explains the term “the Queen’s English”.

Following the advent of the Counterculture during the 1960s, this RP English accent was attacked because it served as a sociolinguistic symbol identifying the rich and powerful, in a word, the upper crust of England (cf. Giles, 1972, 1973...). On account of this, many linguists rejected the term RP English because of the elitist connotations it evoked. “Southern British English” was felt to be more acceptable and “neutral” by many. However, I reject it on three grounds.

- First, it is a misnomer: the English varieties of Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall etc. are also “southern British English” but the accents spoken there are often stigmatized by RP speakers.
- Secondly, southern British English can refer equally to grammar, not only accent. On the other hand, RP English is exclusively restricted to accent, not grammar.
- Thirdly, the reference here is almost exclusively to the English accent of cultivated English speakers from the London area. “British,” on the other hand, includes Wales, Scotland and the unionist areas of Northern Ireland, and I am tempted to add northern England. The populations in these areas are certainly not associated with RP English.
- Finally, I also reject “southern British Standard English” on the same grounds, but especially because, as stated previously, “standard” refers to “grammar,” not to “phonology.” One can speak standard English and have a regional accent, but it would be somewhat bizarre to hear someone with an RP accent using non-standard grammar.

To conclude, I estimate that, despite the negative stereotypes associated with it, and even if the codes have been relaxed to a point where RP can be used in “paritary” social contexts today, it is still the most adequate term to describe this

prestigious English accent.

register – traditionally, a register is understood as a hierarchy of language appropriateness, often stylistic, within the context of a standard language, as in Trudgill’s analysis of the relative pronoun in *Dialects of English: Studies in Grammatical Variation* (Longman/Routledge, various editions). Examples like “He is the man whom I saw yesterday,” “He is the man that I saw yesterday” or “He is the man I saw yesterday” would all be classified as “standard,” with the first example being the most prestigious and, very arguably, the last being considered the least formal (although the most common). However, “He is the man what I saw yesterday” (my example) would usually be excluded from such a discussion as it is considered “dialectal” and thus substandard. However, registers also exist within non-standard varieties and dialects, a point argued by J. R. Firth, (1957) in his posthumous *Papers in Linguistics 1934–1951* (London: Oxford University Press). French linguists such as Le Dû and Le Berre (2019) prefer to describe such variants in terms of a range of “registers” extending from the highly codified Norm to broad oral varieties. While this approach is practical, in my view, it encounters difficulties when accounting for *badumes* (“basilects”), by definition “fragmented, purely oral idioms” with their own linguistic systems. The latter, by nature, correspond more appropriately to “dialects” or “varieties” (see above, also “idiom”). I recorded an interesting example in Deane, Bolton, Lancashire in the 1990s. In Deane dialect speech, one of the greetings used was “[wɔ̃ts ‘døu wi ,ðɪ], literally, “What’s (to) do wi’ thee?” I heard a lady, born in 1915, fully conscious the broad dialectal version was inappropriate when greeting the local vicar, upgrade this expression, politely greeting him with “What’s to do with you, vicar?”

relic areas – in the context of the United States, these are regions – such as the Outer Banks of North Carolina, Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay, or large parts of Appalachia – that preserve conservative linguistic features. Many of these features show continuity dating back to the colonial period and, ultimately, to Great Britain itself (cf. Part III for numerous examples).

rhoticity – the realization of /r/ in 17th- and 18th-century England and America. In this book, discussions focus on two main questions: (1) the quality of Franklin’s /r/—was it apical, as Claude Wise argued (1948), or an approximant or retroflex, as I have argued (cf. Chapter 27)? (2) The degree of post-vocalic /r/ elision in 17th-century New England town records indicate that r-loss was relatively common, contrary to Grandgent’s claim that it was a recent development (post-1850s) in Massachusetts. His interpretation was almost certainly based on his observations of educated New England speech. Both Franklin and Webster insisted on pronouncing /r/ in all positions, as did Walker (1791) who, nevertheless, with

reference to London usage, comments on its weak realization in postvocalic position.

secular standards – see **standardization and standard language**

sharedness principle – the idea that during 17th-century koineization, speakers of diverse English dialects consciously or unconsciously retained only features shared by the largest number of varieties spoken by them in any given colony. This process primarily affected non-standard, paritary registers. This resulted in the preservation of shared aspects of older *badumes*/basilects while eliminating fringe or recessive features – such as initial [kn-] or [ŋh] for <kn>, [x] for <gh>, or verbal enclitics like *chill* [tʃɪl] (“I will”) and *I’s* [ɛɪs ~ əɪs] (“I shall”). Voicing of /f/, /s/ and /ʃ/ in southwestern dialects was similarly eliminated. Morphological features that were widely shared, such as multiple negation and a-prefixing, persisted in non-standard American English because they were common to all the southern and Midland English founder populations. Influence from above – by mesolectal middle-class speakers – and the spread of literacy through both ecclesiastical and secular standards, along with early public education (e.g., Massachusetts, 1642), exerted a powerful standardizing effect on colonial populations.

simplification – a process arising from contact among *badume* speakers at the regional level, resulting in creole-like reduction of phonology, morphology, grammar, syntax and the lexicon. Examples include the streamlining of verbal morphology: in southwestern England, B-forms appear as *I be, thou be, he/she/it be, we be, you be, they be*; in parts of the Midlands and North, forms like *I’m, thee’m, we’m* occur, while *he’m/she’m/they’m* are rare or unattested; other variants include *I’s, thou is, you is, they is*. Such forms are plentiful in AAVE, and their presence may reflect early contacts with speakers of non-standard English inter-dialects.

social layers – see *couche sociale*

sociolinguistics – Hudson (1991) stated that sociolinguistics is a redundant concept since “linguistics” is inseparable from the social dimension of language. Inspired by Marcellesi et al. (1994), I have a very broad vision of sociolinguistics and view it as an umbrella term encompassing the sociology of language, anthropological linguistics, ethnolinguistics, geolinguistics and dialectology.

speech community – a term coined by Milroy and Milroy (1985) referring to a group of speakers sharing common codes of evaluation and expectations about language use. This includes common judgements about appropriateness whether codified and standard or not. The boundaries and extent of any

“speech community” remain vague, however, and on account of its inherently flexible boundaries, Leslie Milroy later emphasized the concepts of “clusters” and “networks” to describe the internal structure of speech communities more precisely. The concepts and interlinkage of idiom and institution are preferred in this study.

stabilization – the process by which a linguistic system becomes more consistent and resistant to rapid change over time. In British America, this occurred during the first century of settlement. Stabilization resulted from koineization, in which competing forms within the “feature pool” were reduced through the “sharedness principle,” primarily affecting paritary varieties, and also through accommodation from above, whereby overtly prestigious speakers exerted influence via secular and ecclesiastical standards. Increased literacy also contributed to linguistic harmonization, again, most particularly in Massachusetts. However, see Lowell’s Biglow Papers (1848) for the limitations of this argument. While competing forms were reduced within more prestigious institutions, they were not entirely eliminated, as many features persisted orally in work-related, paritary-level idioms and institutions (cf. Parts II and III).

standard ideology – the belief, widespread among literate people past and present, that there is only one “correct” way of speaking a language – English or any other major Western European language. This ideology has often led linguists to overlook or undervalue non-standard varieties for the simple reason that they too have been conditioned to accept prescriptive visions on language. As discussed in Chapter 10, standard ideology reflects a lingering influence of the Great Chain of Being, linking social hierarchy to language hierarchy: negative judgements of “low” varieties along a vertical axis are frequently paired with the low social status of their speakers, producing the familiar conflation of “vulgar language” with working-class or rural speech.

standardization and standard language – the social process by which a single linguistic form is selected, often by a committee of self-appointed experts, and promoted as the norm across a community. It is a direct result of codification and is tied to power, institutions, and the “overt prestige” of a disparitary linguistic model and its speakers. The standard is imposed from above and serves as the model for education, administration and other formal domains. In Franklin’s time, both ecclesiastical and secular standards were influential; the secular standard, for example, was not fully codified until Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). Concepts of “correct” and “incorrect” usage derive from the standard. While the standard language carries high social prestige and marks its users as members of elite strata, it is not inherently superior linguistically; any dialect, given sufficient institutional support, could

theoretically have been elevated to the status of a national standard.

synchronic linguistics – the study of a language or variety at a single point in time. Traditionally, linguists emphasized a strict separation between synchronic and diachronic approaches. (de Saussure, 1916). For de Saussure, a synchronic study was the analysis of *état* or “state” of language which he imagined to be what I would describe as a “static slice of time”. However, Labov’s study of social stratification in New York City (1966) demonstrated that a synchronic study can also reveal linguistic change in real time, such as /r/-loss or its retention across social groups. Similarly, modern contrastive dialect studies show features that have been “frozen” at different stages of their evolution, for example, the varied realizations of the PRICE vowel today: [i:], [ɪ], [ɛɪ], [aɪ], [əɪ], [ɔɪ], [a:], etc. These are in fact snapshots of ongoing linguistic change. The idea of an inert state of language is an illusion for one good reason. Any dialect or language is composed of individual speakers each of whom commands a range of idioms and registers that function within an array of social institutions. The reality is that each idiolect is infinitely dynamic and manifests linguistic change in progress.

tense vowels – vowels pronounced with greater muscular “tension,” which can be either short or long. The modern tendency is to assume “tense” vowels are long. Modern French /i/ is produced with more muscular constriction than RP/GA /i:/ and, in Early Modern English (EME), both long and short vowels were realized with the tongue slightly higher and closer to the French realization (cf. *lax vowels*). This historical tenseness may explain the variable lengthening or shortening of vowels observed in the 17th century in England and North America. For example, *sin* could be realized as [sin] rather than [sɪn], and some 18th-century speakers extended it to [si:n] (and perhaps [si:m]), allowing poets to rhyme it with *seen* [si:n]. Similar phenomena are seen in words like *fish*, realized as [fi:] in contemporary Appalachia and Lancashire (RP/GA [fɪʃ]).

uniformitarian principle – in the context of this book, this is the idea that the same processes that operate for contemporary languages (i.e. the role of articulatory linguistics in language change, culturally conditioned sociolinguistic pressures on language and language change, etc.) were also applied to language use in similar ways in past times.

variational linguistics – the branch of linguistics that studies variation in language use. One of the major goals is to better understand how and why speakers choose between different linguistic features in different social, regional or contextual settings. This was one of the primary objectives of Parts II and III. Such studies attempt to demonstrate that linguistic variation is systemic and rule-governed, not random.

variety – see dialect

vocoid – a phonetic sound produced without significant constriction of the vocal tract and which can sound like a vowel but is not necessarily (cf. **contoid**). For instance, for Pike, approximants such as [w], [j], [ɹ] and even syllabic [ɹ] are vocoids. In traditional grammar [w] and [j] were once called semi-vowels.

vulgar speech – the term commonly used from the 17th to the 19th century to describe stigmatized, non-standard varieties spoken by the lower classes. This form of speech is to be contrasted with “polite” language, in reference to the standard speech of high-middle-class speakers and members of the aristocratic class.

Vulgar Old English – a term used by Robert Burchfield (*The English Language: A Survey*, 1985) to describe the stigmatized, rural varieties of Old English spoken across Anglo-Saxon England before the Norman Invasion. The term highlights that, even without written records, basilectal or *badume* forms clearly existed. In northern and eastern England and Scotland, these varieties were influenced by a Scandinavian adstratum, while in the Southwest, along the Welsh border, and into Strathclyde, a Brittonic/Celtic substratum persisted, surviving in places such as Cumbria and Strathclyde until after the Norman Invasion. In parts of Devon, the shift to Old English did not occur until the 10th century, which likely shaped the development and morphological breakdown of the language.

Why is this significant? Contrary to earlier assumptions, Old English speakers did not share a single unified acrolect. Broad, rural varieties were part of the language from its inception and were stigmatized by secular and ecclesiastical elites, explaining the relative scarcity of written evidence. The existence of Vulgar Old English is attested by the Venerable Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of England*, with Cædmon’s Hymn providing a clear example.⁵

5 Cædmon, a servant and monk of poor origin, most likely a Strathclyde Briton, miraculously composed a poem in a dream in which he praised God in an elegant register of Old English, a register he could not otherwise master. This testifies to the existence of a class of Britons and poor Anglo-Saxons who served in monasteries and who spoke “Vulgar Old English”. Cædmon meaning “Battle Station” in Brittonic, appears under a more evolved form of Brittonic as Cadfan (cf. Cadfan ap Iago, a 7th-century Welsh king of Gwynedd).

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About the Team

Alessandra Tosi was the managing editor for this book.

Adèle Kreager proof-read this manuscript and compiled the index.

Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal designed the cover. The cover was produced in InDesign using the Fontin font.

Annie Hine typeset the book in InDesign. The main font is Noto Serif.

Jeremy Bowman produced the PDF, paperback, and hardback editions and created the EPUB.

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Lucy Barnes was in charge of marketing.

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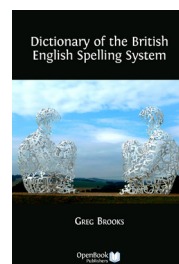
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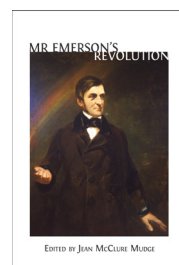
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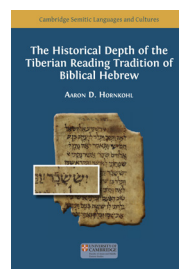
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Benjamin Franklin, Orthoepist and Phonetician

VOL. 1: Language, Literacy and Social Mobility in Franklin's World

Gary D. German

Benjamin Franklin has been hailed as an inventor, scientist, printer, author, philosopher, diplomat, philanthropist and political activist and, especially, a founding father of the United States, but few are aware he was also a phonetician. This book offers a groundbreaking exploration of Franklin's little-studied linguistic legacy—his Reformed Mode of Spelling (1768/1779). In this short treatise, Franklin outlined a plan for a radical, phonetically-based modernization of the English spelling system that would simultaneously serve as a pronunciation guide for what he envisaged to be 'correct' English as well as a practical scheme allowing the unlettered and foreigners to learn to read and write within a week. The social and sociolinguistic reasons for its inception as well as what that model entailed linguistically are the focus of this book.

Moreover, while Franklin's fascination with English orthographic reform is known among specialists, previous studies have rarely taken his reform seriously. This is the first comprehensive linguistic analysis of his phonetic system within the broader historical and sociolinguistic context of early American English, a study which also includes comparative analyses of 17th and 18th century English varieties. Drawing on an impressive array of archival and manuscript sources—some previously unknown—Gary D. German reconstructs Franklin's linguistic environment and investigates how his proposed spelling reform functioned as both a phonetic guide as well as a political and cultural statement.

The book employs a robust historical sociolinguistic methodology which, for the first time, distinguishes between Franklin's native American pronunciation and that proposed in his RMS. The data presented offer a persuasive answer to the question of whether his model was 'English' or 'American' while also exploring speaker networks and personal correspondence to trace linguistic patterns.

This study is a vital contribution to historical linguistics, American studies, and the growing field of World Englishes. With its detailed analysis and interdisciplinary appeal, it sheds new light on both Franklin's intellectual world and the complex phonological landscape of early American-English. It is essential reading for linguists, historians, and anyone fascinated by the roots of American English.

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